The University of Iowa
Division of Continuing Education

Continuing Education

Study Guide for:

PSQF:4134/EDTL:4934 (07P:134/07U:134)
Parent-Teacher Communication

College of Education
Department of Psychological and Quantitative Foundations

Coursewriter & Instructor:

Stewart Ehly, Ph.D.

About this Course:
Semester Hours Earned at Completion – 3
Written Assignments – 5
Examinations – 3

n 7/95
r 10/2000
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adj 7/2007
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r 5/11
mr 5/14
mr 5/15

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ABOUT THE COURSEWRITER & INSTRUCTOR

Stewart Ehly, Ph.D. is a professor in the Division of Psychological and Quantitative Foundations at The University of Iowa. He received his B.A. degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1971) and his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin (1975). At The University of Iowa, he teaches courses on parent-teacher communication, home/school/ community partnerships, consultation, and system interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview and Goals

Parent-teacher Communication is a three semester-hour course that provides information on a broad array of issues relating to parents' involvement in their children's education. The course meets an Iowa Department of Education requirement for content on parent-teacher relationships and is required for several degree plans within the College of Education at The University of Iowa. The course may be taken through the Division of Teaching and Learning's Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education (07E:134) or Special Education (07U:134), or through the Division of Psychological and Quantitative Foundations (07P:134).

The materials in the course will guide you through critical communication techniques essential to parent-teacher collaboration. After essential skills are defined, the course reviews important options for parent-teacher involvement available within schools. The strategies for involvement are considered within the context of selected issues affecting public education. Finally, the course considers legal/ethical and professional issues surrounding involvement with parents.

A quick note: while the course refers to "parents" in its title, consideration within the course is not limited to biological and adoptive parents who have custody of children. Materials can be considered to apply to all forms of adult custodial care of children and the methods adults can use in their encounters with educators. As might be expected, many of the techniques considered are not restricted to encounters between educators and adult caretakers, but have universal application.

Course Components

This course is divided into ten lessons with each lesson divided into several sections. The **lesson goals** provide an overview of the lesson topics and introduce special considerations that you should be aware of as you study the assigned work. The **reading assignment** specifies material in the Berger and Riojas-Cortez textbook as well as the study guide appendices. You may wish to read the lesson **discussion** section before proceeding with the assigned readings. The discussion will provide background and perspective on the readings and the lesson topics. Some discussion sections may be considerably longer than others, depending on the adequacy of the materials for the assigned readings. For example, in Lesson 1 "Introduction to the Issues," I have provided extensive notes on background issues.

Following the discussion is a **self-study** section, which is designed to help you think about the issues introduced in the lesson and as a means of preparing you for the course examinations. Except in Lesson 1, the self-study section refers you to the end of each chapter in the Berger and Riojas-Cortez text where there is a section entitled, "Suggested class activities and discussions." To check on your understanding of the chapter content, **I encourage you to complete at least one activity per chapter.** [The self-study activities are not to be sent in for grading, **unless** I request a report on your activities as part of the written assignment.]

Finally, five lessons require a **written assignment**. These assignments involve writing reports or notes concerning the lesson material, and in some cases will involve your work on some of the activities specified in the Berger and Riojas-Cortez text's "Suggested class activities and discussions."

Examinations

After the third, sixth, and tenth lessons, two-hour, supervised **examinations** are scheduled covering materials within designated lessons. Descriptions of the exams are included in those lessons. There is no comprehensive exam.

Information regarding **exam registration**, scheduling, and policies is posted on the **course homepage** (ICON). **On campus students** taking exams at the Continuing Education Testing Center should register for their exam at least **two business days** before their intended examination day. **Off campus students** will take exams using an online proctored exam service.

Required Course Materials

Materials Provided by the DCE:

The following course materials may be downloaded from the **Content** section of the *course site*.

- Study Guide and syllabus
- Textbook and Materials Order Form
- Guided Independent Study Policies (PDF)

Textbooks/Course Materials to Purchase Independently:

The course textbooks may be ordered from a local bookstore (see Textbook and Materials Order Form) or from the vendor of your choice. Note: If you purchase items from an alternate bookseller, it is imperative that you obtain the correct editions.

- **Iowa Book, L.L.C.** Web: http://www.iowabook.com/ Phone: 319.337.4188
- **University Bookstore** Web: http://www.book.uiowa.edu/ Phone: 319.335.3179

Required:

- Berger, Eugenia Hepworth, & Riojas-Cortez, Mari. *Parents as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together*, 9th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson Education, 2016. ISBN 9780133802467

Optional Readings:

Interested students can review handouts distributed in the on-campus version of this course; these materials are available on the Web site for the on-campus version of the course (no password is required): *http://www.uiowa.edu/~c07p134/* (this Web site is separate from the Web site where the online version of this study guide is available).

Optional Video:

A video, providing sample depictions of communication skills that are useful for parent-teacher communication, is provided upon enrollment. Viewing of the video is not required for successful completion of the assignments or exams, but you are encouraged to view it. The student can view the video in association with the material in Lesson 2, then practice skills to become more familiar with the techniques described within the course study guide. While the content of the video is self-explanatory, students are encouraged to contact the instructor with questions concerning application of techniques. The video is approximately 15 minutes in length.

Course Grade

Students will be assessed based on their performance on the following items:

Grades are assigned upon completion of all requirements and are based on the 600 points possible—as follows: There are five written assignments (60 points each) and three exams (100 points each). They will be evaluated using the following point-based system. You will receive a

standard letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F in the course, with a ± mark assigned as appropriate, determined on the basis of the grading scale below.

Criterion	Points
Five Written Assignments (60 pts each)	300 pts
Three Exams (100 pts each)	300 pts
Total	600 pts

Standard A through F grades are assigned, with plus and minus as appropriate.

A	B	C	D	F
588 - 600 = **A+**	528 - 539 = **B+**	468 - 479 = **C+**	408 - 419 = **D+**	Below 360 = **F**
552 - 587 = **A**	492 - 527 = **B**	432 - 467 = **C**	372 - 407 = **D**	
540 - 551 = **A–**	480 - 491 = **B–**	420 - 431 = **C–**	360 - 371 = **D–**	

Assignments and exams are judged on the quality of ideas, the support provided, and the integration of materials with relevant experience. The instructor looks for the following elements within exam responses:

1. Every section of the question is answered. Students sometimes neglect to answer every part of a question. This oversight costs points.
2. The answer reflects content from the readings, including study guide discussion notes, and personal experience (as appropriate).
3. The answer demonstrates your understanding of the issues raised within the question.
4. You successfully synthesize content from relevant sources and clearly state your argument.
5. The answer contains discussion that offers support for your arguments.
6. Answers that contain analysis of issues within a question, offer an assessment of cited research and applications, and evaluate the readings are preferred over responses that are limited to summarization of points made by others.

*I am interested in finding out how **you** make sense of the content of this course. The assignments and exams are my best means of determining how well you have grasped issues relating to parent-teacher communication.*

Suggestions for Study

You should work through the lessons in the order they are presented and complete lesson assignments as soon as possible after reading the discussion and assigned readings.

Web and E-mail Options

ICON Course Wed Site:

The materials needed to complete this course (i.e. Study Guide) are available on the World Wide Web via ICON (Iowa Courses Online). To access the course site:

1. Go to: *http://icon.uiowa.edu/*
2. **Login to ICON** using your Hawk ID and Password.

Hawk ID Help:

Forgot your Hawk ID password? Can't find the letter that was sent with your Hawk ID password? **Call the ITS Help Desk** (319.384.HELP) at The University and ask them to reset your password. You may also call our toll-free number (800.272.6430) and select the phone routing option (#2) that connects you with the ITS Help Desk. For additional information about your Hawk ID (Hawk ID Guide), visit *http://hawkid.uiowa.edu/*.

Online Tutorials:

Flash based tutorials* are available online to provide basic instruction on how to log in to ICON and use some of its tools (i.e. Dropbox, Quizzes, Calendar). Additional tutorials are provided that can assist you in the use of Webmail, Hawk ID Tools, ISIS, and more. To view the online tutorials go to *http://www.uiowa.edu/~online/tutorials/tutorial.html*. Be aware that Continuing Education courses do not use all of the components explained in the ICON tutorial.

** Requires a Flash Player to be installed on your computer. For a free download, go to: http://continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/facultysupport/idev/connect/.*

Technical Support for Online Students:

For technical assistance, including FAQs, software demos and downloads:

1. Visit our Technical Help page at *http://continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/tech-support/index.html*; or
2. Contact us by email at *tech-support@www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu*.

E-mail Alias:

A **University of Iowa e-mail** alias was created for you when you enrolled in this course (i.e. name-lastname@uiowa.edu), if you didn't already have one. All subsequent e-mail contact from our office will go to your UI alias and be routed to the e-mail routing address you specified on ISIS.

- To update/modify your current routing address, login to *http://isis.uiowa.edu/*. Then click on **My UIowa >My Email> Update Email Routing Address**. Modify your routing address as desired, and click on the **Update Email Routing Address** button to submit your change.
- For additional information about your **UI email account**, visit: *http://its.uiowa.edu/hawkmail*.

E-mail is an official method of communication at The University of Iowa.
Faculty and students can expect to receive important communications via email.

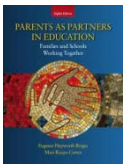
LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

Instructor Comments:

As you begin the course, please reflect on your own interest in the topic of parent-teacher involvement. Many of you enrolled in this course will be educators, parents, or both. Your experiences with schools and involvement are directly relevant to the course. I encourage you to draw upon your experiences, both to make sense of the course materials and to use your hard-earned expertise to provide relevance to assignments and exam answers.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Chapters 1 and 4



Lesson Overview

This lesson provides an overview of the topic of parent-teacher involvement and will introduce important terminology used throughout the course.

Discussion

Education in the United States has been a fascinating enterprise since the very first efforts to teach children. As Cremin (1970, 1980, 1988) documents in his massive study of American education, teachers and their students, while at the heart of the educational enterprise, have directed their efforts to satisfy the priorities of parents and the broader community. Relations between those adults responsible for the child's upbringing (parents or guardians) and those responsible for schooling the child (teachers, administrators, and support personnel) have not always been cordial, but have produced an educational system that until very recently was the envy of the world. That envy may be tempered by the current perception that American students do not compete well on tests given to children in other parts of the world. What has survived in this country is a commitment to educating all students for twelve or more years, an effort that extends well beyond the priorities of most countries.

This course will explore many facets of parent-teacher communication. The ideas expressed in the chapters will reflect the broad literature on schools and parent involvement, but will extend as well to consider strategies and tactics seldom used by today's educators in their work with families. The course will offer information on many ideas that have the potential of improving parent-teacher interactions.

This initial lesson will establish a context within which the remainder of the lessons will be embedded. Briefly, I will argue for the promotion of established as well as new forms of parental involvement. Some of these forms will stretch the responsibilities of parents and teachers beyond those currently accepted by both parties. When shifts in roles and responsibility are discussed, every effort will be made to provide an extended rationale for each proposal. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the following points:

1. an assessment of current expectations of parent-teacher cooperation;
2. a look at parent involvement in history;
3. how changes in families have influenced school-home relations and how problems in the broad society have affected students and their families;
4. an exploration of common roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents;
5. a brief overview of relevant research on parent involvement;
6. a review of typical teacher training efforts relating to skills for working with families.

Subsequent lessons will elaborate on each of these points, as well as provide additional emphasis on special areas of concern that schools experience in serving families in the twentieth century. Our discussion begins at the center of many educators' worries about education today—public expectations of teachers.

The Status of Parent-Teacher Cooperation

Relations between parents and teachers tend to follow well-traveled paths that have not varied over the years. Johnson (1990), for example, highlights the broad expectation among teachers in public and private schools that parents will participate, in some fashion, in the traditional forms of involvement that schools make available. Lombana (1983) points out that services which offer narrow forms of participation (e.g., coming to a school play) attract the greatest numbers of parents, while more individualized forms of parent-teacher (or school staff-parent) contact attract smaller audiences. Lombana cites school conferences, parent education, and parent counseling activities as serving more select segments of the parent population than the group-oriented offerings.

What have been labeled traditional forms of service continue to be valued by parents and teachers; extensive information on such options as parent conferences and parent education is provided in subsequent lessons. The parents of children today, however, differ in important ways from the parents of twenty, thirty, or fifty years ago. More children are living with one parent, more are involved in special programs to assist with learning and behavioral needs, and more are exposed to

living conditions that our society considers to be a risk to development. Whether today's society truly differs from that of earlier decades matters little; regardless of the objective evidence of similarity and difference between decades, our perceptions influence the extent to which we believe children and families require special attention or services.

Many educators and parents are calling for new avenues of collaboration between the home and the school. Beyond the challenge of raising children, parents strive to create future citizens that will contribute to adult society. The perception (accurate or not) that schools are not effective in preparing students for the full responsibilities of citizenship has stimulated a variety of efforts to revise and reform the mission and structure of schools.

A large portion of the literature on school reform targets home/school relations. As Atkin, Bastiani, and Goode (1988) establish, concern about schools and the desire to improve home/school relations is not just a priority in the United States. Many countries, in their striving to succeed in economic and political arenas, are emphasizing improvement in school programs and services.

Swap (1987) offers an example of one segment of the current movement to involve parents in schools. In a text directed at parents and teachers, Swap argues that both parties have much to gain from a strengthening of collaboration: (1) children benefit from an increase of home/school involvement; (2) parents and teachers experience increased feelings of enthusiasm for continuing to work together and come to appreciate the strengths of the other person; (3) a school profits from the efforts that parents can provide in support of school programs.

How do children benefit from strong collaboration between the family and the school? Swap cites Moles (1982), who reported many benefits (greater likelihood to pass to the next grade, decreased likelihood to be referred for special education services, greater success in completing subsequent school experiences) for preschool-aged children in an intervention program, and Hauser-Cram (1983), who found higher achievement scores for children with highly involved parents. Additional benefits to the child will be reviewed in Lesson 9, which discusses children considered at risk of school failure.

The benefits that adults experience as part of the school-home relationship may be subtle for some, dramatic for others. You have only to survey the growing literature on parent involvement (e.g., in journals such as *Equity and Choice*) to discover the enthusiasm that increased collaboration can bring to educators (the voices of parents are less apparent, not from lack of benefit, but from a lack of outlets to express their opinions—parents don't have their own journals!). The reader who is already a classroom teacher can summon up memories of feelings as a consequence of positive and

productive relations with parents. Such feelings are difficult to quantify, but play an important role in our overall perception of the worthwhileness of our efforts.

Schools that involve parents in active roles within the schools report that the energies of parents extend well beyond the general boundaries of volunteering. Parents are willing and able to come into the school to offer their time, skills, and energies, and often more than willing to contribute outside of the confines of the school day. Lightfoot (1978) notes that schools may fail, to their detriment, to tap available parent energies. The current movement to enhance home/school relations has offered schools examples of the means by which parents can be recruited, trained if needed, and involved in important school functions.

A more basic and challenging task than directing parent efforts is collaborating with parents to define the mission and structure of the school itself. Writers such as Chubb and Moe (1990) and Sarason (1990a) have argued that schools as presently structured are restricted in their visions of issues such as parent-teacher involvement, and lack the means to change in a manner that will prove effective over time. The recent text by Chubb and Moe argues strongly for greater choice in the types of programs and schools available in any community. These authors are convinced that the current emphasis in operating a single public system, continually subject to the pressures of popular opinion, forces a defensive reaction from educators and limits risk taking and motivation for change.

Sarason, in his extensive writings, has described the organizational culture of schools as a barrier to even short-term change. Many writers have recognized that public schools differ from other organizations (such as businesses) in that there are different pressures applied to educators to change what they do. Most pressures do not last long and have the unintended effect of convincing educators that if they can hold out for a while, pressure groups will withdraw. Sarason (1990a) notes that educators work in an environment that seldom attends to the need for long-term planning for change. Fads and fashions come and go in education. Sarason, Chubb and Moe, and Swap, to cite a few recent writers, are adamant that the public's shifts in attention on the needs of schools should not detract from the momentum to examine how we involve parents in our schools and to negotiate anew our contract with society for the operation of public education.

Potential Barriers to Parent Involvement

Many factors can influence the opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate. The pressures of life today restrict the time available to conduct any activity. With many parents working or involved in activities within the community, the time necessary to visit a school may be limited. The issue, of course, is not simply time. Parents and teachers recognize that their work together is important. Yet access to each other is restricted by the multiple demands of operating a family, engaging in a job (or jobs), and the realities of life in American society. In many areas, the nuisances of traffic and distance make travel to and from schools difficult.

Swap (1987) refers to another important barrier that influences our contacts with parents—the rituals of home-school relations. American educators have been successful, especially in this century, in convincing parents that they, the educators, are skilled and quite capable of providing the broad range of necessary services that comprise the mission of schools today. Many schools see the typical parent three or four times a year at an open house, parent conferences, and the class play. Parents value these contacts, without a doubt. There is a symbolic aspect to such contacts: parents display their recognition of the importance of the school and the teacher, and teachers open their doors to a form of scrutiny. Yet the very fact that the contacts follow a well-defined pattern that can be considered a ritual signals that little effort on the part of any participant is necessary to satisfy the goals of the event being attended. The impact of traditional home/school contacts on the child has been questioned, according to Swap.

Swap (1987) also notes that when problems arise and require the immediate attention of parent and teacher, little ground has been established for open and direct communication. With little prior occasion to develop trust and to learn the style and preferences of the other party, collaboration during a crisis starts, at best, slowly and at worst with caution and even suspicion.

The barriers cited are important to the participants in any exchange, yet would have received little attention in the education literature if everyone were satisfied with the quality of our schools and their products, children versed in the knowledge and skills needed for adult life. Our schools today, instead, have been challenged from many directions, and communities are convinced that something must be done to improve the quality of schools and their potential for influencing young learners. Given current misgivings about schools, few readers will be surprised that parent-teacher relations have been examined closely, with the intent of discovering new means of exchanging ideas, skills, and energy.

An Overview of the History of Parent Involvement

Having made reference to some rituals of parent-teacher activities, I would like to pause and reflect on how American schools developed into institutions that some observers believe force parents into a marginal role. This sections will explore briefly the evolution of American schools' mission and the shifting role that parents have played in defining the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of school systems.

Cremin (1970; 1980; 1988) has accumulated the most extensive collection of information on education in the United States. For most of this country's history prior to the twentieth century, public schools only approximated the complexity of current offerings. Within the present century, expansion of that complexity began after World War II (Modell 1989)[1]. The farther back that schools or, more broadly, efforts at education are considered, the more likely one is to encounter explicit instruction in religion and moral conduct. As public schools evolved towards the structure present in schools today, steady erosion of religion's influence becomes apparent.

Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) discuss the ebb and flow of interest of Americans in education, child development, and family life. Popular writings for hundreds of years have informed citizens about the fact and fiction of each of these topics. As the nineteenth century was approaching its end, communities became aware of the role that professionals could play to recommend and develop services that would benefit family members.

Schools, while always an important segment of the community, began to serve growing numbers of children who had needs that reflected their status in the United States. Some of these children were recent immigrants, others from impoverished backgrounds, still others who spoke languages other than English. Community members, recognizing that society was better served with an educated populace instead of an ignorant citizenry, pressured schools to change in response to children's needs. But as Perkinson (1968) has documented so well, we have little evidence that schools have ever been the best vehicle to address priorities other than the education of children.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the federal government has increased its role in directing the programs and priorities of the schools. States have focused more directly than ever before on the tasks performed by educators and the outcomes that these produce. Local schools have been overwhelmed with information and offers of service to guide them in the performance of their

[1] Cremin (1988) explores the motivation for rapid expansion after World War II—developing programs that would attract and retain adolescents.

duties. Few would argue about the importance of any of these changes. Recognition of the cost of any reform effort is necessary, however. The expansion of governmental bureaucracies and the growth in influence of professional groups have succeeded at the price of stripping away the influence of parents and children on the operation of schools.

Cremin's writings are instructive on this point. Early American families often hired a tutor or directly participated in hiring a teacher for the small number of children in the community. Families could hire and fire on any criteria considered relevant and important. As communities grew, families lost a portion of their influence. When professionals were considered to be essential to the operation and supervision of services, influence waned further.

Schools in the twentieth century continued the erosion of influence until the final irony was reached: parents now need to be empowered so that they will believe educators when invited to contribute to the efforts of schools. Lightfoot (1978), in recognizing the ironies involved, also argued convincingly that while the various social sciences have helped our understanding of the educational process, they have added a note of pessimism and pathology into the discussion of schools and families. Parents become the problem when they do not cooperate with the wishes of the schools. Families are seen as pathological if their behaviors do not match those of the professionals or satisfy the latter's moral values.

If schools are going to change in basic ways to involve parents, we must appreciate how we came to the state of affairs we have today—we have failed to maintain the involvement of parents in ways central to the school's mission. The broader issue of the family's status in today's society is of equal concern. Writers such as Lasch (1977; 1991) have emphasized the erosion of influence that has occurred in many areas affecting families. In examining the means by which we can enhance the impact of parents in schools, we may succeed as well in promoting a broader influence for the aspirations of families in general society.

The Changing Family: Society and Schools

By reading any recent text on families, children, or schools, the interested observer would come away with the impression that the world today is, at a minimum, chaotic and, at worst, dangerous to mental and physical health. While world events, at times, seem to become more difficult to understand and influence, so do the tasks of childrearing and education appear to be more challenging than ever before.

One important shift from earlier decades is the public call for recognition of the rights of children (Hart 1991). The attempts by many countries and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children to specify the quality of the means by which children are treated is a dramatic development in considerations affecting the status of children within the world community. Attention has been directed at a previously missing link in the motivation of service providers to serve families—i.e., that the child has a right, in his or her best interests, to grow and mature in an environment that allows the fullest means possible of insuring respect for the child (Melton 1991).

Recognition of children's rights within the United States has evolved over the history of the country, first addressing rights of adolescents and, through the impact of several court cases, broader rights that apply to all children (Modell 1989). Berger and Berger (1987) note that while recognition of parents' rights to the guardianship of their children has existed for centuries, recent clarification of these rights has produced legislation that directly affects schools.

The most obvious example having an impact on schools is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment 1974), which provides access to school records for parents of students under age eighteen and to the students themselves when they turn eighteen. Legislation involving the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was instrumental in clarifying rights for handicapped children and their parents, in addition to outlining procedures by which those rights could be satisfied (Spidel 1987)

The refinement and clarification of the rights of children and their parents coincided with, and reflected, changes in American society. While the family has played a continuing role as educator of the child (Mintz 1989; Lewis 1989), important changes in the work patterns of adult family members have produced fewer opportunities for contacts with children. Reich (1991) has documented the far-reaching evolution of the world economy that has triggered changes in the types of industries and services that succeed in the American economy. These changes, in turn, stimulate adults to meet or exceed their previous economic status. Given the nature of today's political and economic climate, few families can satisfy their needs and desires without having every adult in a household employed, sometimes at more than one job apiece. The impact on the family extends far beyond the adults' inability to spend time with their family (O'Neil, Fishman, and Kinsella-Shaw 1987).

A case can be made that families are changing in response to global and more local events. Some authors raise the possibility that changes in the nature of family life may precede shifts in the economy and actually trigger changes in the political and economic structures within society. Mintz

and Kellogg (1988), in their social history of the American family, argue that conceptions of ideals for families and family life have stimulated as much change as they have reflected. Lasch (1977) labels the family as the institution "most resistant to change (p. 4)" and discussed how perceived crises in the family produced important revisions to laws and customs.

Whatever the era, families have been valued. In the 1990s, voices continue to be raised in support of the family from traditional outlets such as the church. In line with historical precedents, the most vehement dialogue on the topic has been heard within the political arena. While research on families continues apace, most readers probably believe that family life is changing within American society, perhaps heading towards crisis. Many educators sense an urgency to reach out to families and involve them more fully than ever before in the workings of the school.

Schools Reaching Out

One attempt to more closely align the efforts of parents and teachers in support of children is that of the Schools Reaching Out Project (Davies 1991). Reflecting a recognition of what Sizer (1991) called "no pain, no gain," professionals in two districts (New York City and Boston) engaged in an intensive examination of the problems facing their schools and realized that one ingredient to a successful effort at improving their impact involved bringing parents into partnership with the schools. Swap (1991) provides a brief overview of the planning that produced the Schools Reaching Out Project. Facing the problems inherent to many large urban districts, educators in the two communities came to realize that in contrast to the expressed beliefs of educators, parents must not be valued assets to the operation of the school because so few parents were involved with any school program.

Krasnow (1991), in providing another account of the development of the project, describes early efforts by teachers to analyze why parents were not represented in more school activities. One reason cited was that some teachers "just wanted parents to come to school for conferences." (p. 22). Other teachers enjoyed participation of parents as tutors and aides. A few teachers voiced a preference that parents "leave the classroom to the teacher." Still others could envision new means of attracting and retaining parents into the school building. Once recruited, parents could be provided with the resources necessary to accomplish any of a number of tasks.

To change previous patterns of low involvement and to enhance children's achievement, educators volunteered to become part of new efforts at parent-teacher communication. Some goals included the following:

1. bringing parents and school personnel together more often so that rapport could be established and motivation of all parties increased. Swap describes such activities as potluck dinners, planning councils involving all constituency groups, teacher-led workshops, and other events designed to establish clear and multiple channels of communication between home (and community) and the school;
2. increasing written communication between home and school. Newsletters, notes on special events, and materials on activities that children could use at home were among the correspondence that was forwarded to parents;
3. creating Parent Centers so that parents would have an established address within the school. The Center would fulfill many functions, most importantly serving as a base for the coordination of the many parent-initiated activities planned and delivered within the building (see Jackson 1991, for a description of one parent center). Less formal benefits could be realized, as parents met each other and could socialize prior to working on their agenda for the day. Teachers in the participating schools were paid a small stipend for coordinating special activities and projects with interested parents. For example, Swap (1991) describes the efforts of an art teacher who worked with parents on a project involving research on and the creation of masks;
4. planning special events with an eye towards the interests and the preferences of local parents. Volunteer parents conducted outreach activities by which they visited area families to discuss their perceptions on how the school and parent project could better serve their needs. Parents, through the outreach effort, could receive information on service resources and materials that related to specific concerns in childrearing;
5. learning for children and their parents was a priority. Parents could take courses in English as a second language and prepare for a high school equivalency examination, while children could benefit from after-school and special programs offered through the collaboration of parents and teachers.

Work on these and several other objectives helped the project schools to increase parent involvement to new levels and improve the overall quality of the schools' academic programs. Other efforts across the United States to increase parent-teacher involvement will be considered in later lessons.

Common Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers and parents work along common lines to nurture children's abilities and skills. Parents are, of course, the child's first teachers, responsible for the critical early care, nourishment, and stimulation of the infant. Parents may allow other persons, such as siblings, relatives, friends, and care providers to interact with the child, but the average family will maintain responsibility for coordination of all such contacts.

Jaffe (1991) discusses four goals that he believes are central to the work of parents:

1. **Good behavior.** While the dimensions of what constitutes good behavior will vary from situation to situation, each family must decide the limits within which a child will be expected to behave. Much hard work for the parents will center on defining appropriate limits and enforcing a standard of behavior that will allow the child to learn responsibility.
2. **Competence.** Mastery of the environment represents another important goal for parents. The effective parent will gauge the child's ability to deal with responsibilities and guide the child toward an ever more complex set of expectations. Eventual self-reliance represents an essential outcome from such activities. The parent assists the child to master all dimensions of competency, from the physical, to the cognitive, to the emotional.
3. **Good parent-child relationships.** Socialization of the child centers around the interpersonal relationships inherent to family life. Parents (assuming two partners) offer a model of adult-adult and adult-child communication. Nonverbal and verbal forms of communication can be observed and imitated by the child to a point that the child is able to interact successfully with non-family members. Emphasis on the importance of parent-child communication, and the skills to improve parent behavior, is central to many parent education programs.
4. **Self-esteem and self-confidence.** Jaffe believes that the fruits of a parent's efforts will be a child able to proceed with confidence and self-esteem through the developmental tasks of childhood. Theories of counseling children attest to the power of the family in shaping attitudes and emotions for productive development (cf. Cormier and Cormier 1991).

Brooks (1991) discusses how conceptions of the role of parents vis-a-vis their children have changed with every generation. Consistent with Jaffe, she considers goals of parenting to include modeling, communication, discipline and love. Expanding on the emotional dimensions of parenting, she considers trust, respect, and honesty to be essential goals for every parent. Time,

attention, and concern represent other ingredients to effective parenting, so that parents provide ongoing and stable contact with the developing child.

Bigner (1989) places socialization at the center of the parenting role. The many elements of socialization absorb the separate elements discussed above from Jaffe and Brooks. Bigner recognizes, however, the difficulty faced by parents in charting the methods they will used to insure an adequately socialized child. Citing the work of LeMasters (1974), Bigner assesses the challenges parents face in raising children in any era:

1. The definition of the parent's role is fluid, subject to the perceptions of the parent as influenced by family and societal pressures. Limited resources are available to train adults for their work as parents. Parents may consult popular literature on child rearing issues, but the advice obtained may not result in well-informed decisions.
2. High expectations for a child can be modified quickly by the realities of childrearing. Given the natural development of children toward independence, parents soon find their intentions challenged by the person they most want to help—the child. Bigner notes that parents have little control over the nature (i.e., temperament) of their child.
3. Parenthood is only one of several roles maintained by the adults involved. Responsibilities in the work place, the community, and the family can affect the time, energy, and motivation to address a particular interest, need, or preference of the child. And while we live in a society that touts the virtues of parenthood, relatively little sympathy or support is provided to an adult faced with a conflict between a parenting responsibility and demands from another sphere of activity, such as work.

The efforts of fathers and mothers to raise their children and to meet the demands of modern life are a drain on even the most capable parent. Schools, of necessity, work with a wide range of parents, varying in their abilities as child rearers and their capability to assist schools. Many teachers are parents and can appreciate the difficulties involved in balancing a full complement of responsibilities toward family and community. Empathy can guide many teachers toward helping parents understand what schools are attempting to accomplish with children and how a parent can support a child's progress.

Epstein (1988) lists the basic obligations of the parents as

1. providing for the health and safety of children;
2. preparing children for school by ensuring that children are exposed to the prerequisites to learning and socialization;

3. teaching children how to be valued and contributing members of the family and, by extension, other groups;
4. creating and ensuring that home conditions are conducive to learning and development.

Even in the most chaotic home setting, a parent's commitment to the value of learning can reinforce the school's efforts [see, for example, Kotlowitz's (1990) description of two boys growing up in a housing project in Chicago and the influence of parental values on the children's school involvement].

Goals of teachers in private schools may be easier to list than goals for teachers within public schools, argues Johnson (1990). Citing "academic excellence, character development, individualized learning, [and] spiritual growth" (p. 228) as private school goals, Johnson notes that teachers in public schools seem less attuned to system-wide goals and more concerned with personal goals for students. While all teachers value and care for children, consensus on important goals for a school may reflect the type of community within which the school is located. The goals of teachers serving upper-class and middle-class students may differ from those of teachers who serve working-class and lower-class children. In large measure, the differences reflect the pressures that parents can bring to bear on children and teachers to meet parental expectations of academic success.

In the classroom, teachers are expected to fulfill core responsibilities of academic instruction, guidance to student learning and growth, discipline of students, and coordination of teaching with colleagues and allied professionals. While parents are the second most important consumers of services provided by teachers, attention of both parties is directed at the impact of the school on the child. Lightfoot (1978) proposes that, optimally, parents and teachers will "recognize the validity and necessity of both parenting and teaching for the effective socialization of young children in this society" (p. 39) With collaboration and mutual recognition of the benefits that children will derive through cooperation, parents and teachers can begin to understand and appreciate their individual and shared goals for children. Examination of such goals can lead to discussion of how parents and teachers can shape their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of childcare and education to more fully integrate the ideas and energies of all interested parties.

Epstein (1988), in considering the basic obligations of schools, lists the following:

1. ongoing communication with parents about school activities and the progress of the child;
2. maintaining the parent's interest and improving understanding by exposing the parent to a variety of information on the school's efforts and on the child's progress. Forms of written communication (notes, memos, report cards, newsletters) could supplement oral

communication (talks on the telephone, face-to-face conferences). Extending beyond these basic obligations would be the school's attempts to involve parents in an extended range of school services, prepare and assist parents to promote learning activities at home, and involve parents in school governance and child advocacy efforts.

An interesting perspective on teacher involvement with parents is offered by Atkin, Bastiani, and Goode (1988), who propose that listening to parents be integrated, by teachers, into their personal philosophies and professional agendas. Arguing that too often teacher attitudes towards parents reflect stereotypes rather than perceptions of actual behavior, the authors propose that teachers listen closely to parents, the likely result of which will be an appreciation of the concerns and perceptions of parents. Important tasks for the teacher will be helping parents to make sense of what schools are attempting to accomplish with their children, as well as encouraging parents to develop greater confidence in their own skills as educators.

Atkin, Bastiani, and Goode (1988) do not assume that teachers can change—without much hard work—preconceptions of, or past practices with, parents. They offer teachers a useful tool by which home-school relations can be examined. Developing a biography of home/school relations, the authors ask teachers interested in deepening their understanding of parents to work closely with parents, gathering information on the following:

1. a view of the parent's contribution to the child's learning (an on-the-job perspective);
2. a view of the parent's perceptions of the status of teachers, based on his or her own experiences as a student, current contacts, or, for a few, personal experiences as teachers;
3. a view of the parent's philosophy of education, influencing personal expectations of the school and teacher;
4. a view of the parent's knowledge of the school in which the child is placed. Past and current encounters, as well as the school’s reputation in the community might influence perceptions;
5. a view of the family and its stage in the family life cycle. The authors propose that the teacher understand the resources and challenges facing the family. Who are the adults and the children in the household? Who is available to nurture and support the children? These and other characteristics of the household and family can be addressed.

The task of assessing parents is only the beginning step to creating a biography of home/school relations. The authors next propose that teachers generate the following information:

1. a view of the professional's status, including perceptions based on personal experiences as a child and a professional in schools, pre-service and in-service training, and knowledge of children served;
2. a view of the status of parents in the learning process. Understanding what the school has done to promote parental involvement is an important part of the assessment process. Past and current contacts with parents (or, for some, involvement as parents in school programs) will promote an appreciation of the assets and barriers facing parents in their attempts to improve their children's education;
3. a view of the professional's philosophy of education. While preservice education does its best to implant such a philosophy, years of working with children are very influential on the teacher's ideas for "how, when, and where, teaching and learning occurs;" (p. 24)
4. a view of the community served by the teacher. Exposure to the community and the resources available to support the education of children is critical to a teacher's understanding of families and their options for educational services;
5. a view (and appreciation) of the steps involved in schooling children, from the beginning to the conclusion of public education's attempts to nurture and guide children. An important element to teacher awareness is recognition of the changes that occur or are likely to occur in parental involvement over the course of the child's school career.

The final element to Atkin, Bastiani, and Goode's (1988) schema involves an examination of factors that affect the bringing together of parents and teachers. The authors propose that consideration be given to the following issues and factors:

1. issues of class, culture, race, and gender as they may impinge on the perceptions and actions of parents and teachers;
2. the factor of the child as a mediator to parent-teacher involvement: The quality of the relationships between parent-child and between child-teacher can influence the course of involvement between concerned adults;
3. the factor of the child's personality and behavior in school and at home. The teacher can assess the child's abilities and level of independence, as well as the availability and capability of the child to mediate between home and school. Some children are better able than others to understand the merits of close involvement between home and school. We are familiar with the opposite scenario, in which the child withholds (e.g., does not bring home a report card with low marks) or distorts (e.g., does not tell all of the details relating to a problem encountered in school) information. Children are well aware that parents and

teachers are concerned about their learning and participation in school activities. When children are able to be active participants and positive forces in promoting parent-teacher involvement, the teacher's efforts are amplified.

In closing this section, consider the ideas of Rich (1987a, b), who argues that central to improved relations between parent and teacher (and critical to the recognition of common goals and responsibilities) is the adoption of an adult-to-adult stance with parents. However complex the business of educating children in today's society, teacher efforts directed at collaborating with parents are more likely to elicit cooperation if we always keep in sight the fact that we are dealing with fellow adults, individuals committed to their children, and bringing into the school with them a life-time of experiences, thoughts, and feelings. As educators, we only can benefit by advertising our willingness to join forces with parents in support of the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development of children.

Research on Parent Involvement

Many educators, parents, and researchers have argued that parent involvement is a potent influence on a child's school performance. In fact, a belief in the essential nature of parent involvement is widespread. For example, Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1990), in their widely respected text, The school and community relations, believe that "a good school community relations program should encompass the concept of a partnership between the school and the parent." (p. 142) Their proposal is based on two studies that established the important of such involvement.[2]

Epstein (1988), in serving as guest editor to a special issue (on the topic of parental involvement) of Educational Horizons, summarized the current stage of knowledge about schools working with families. Her key points included: (1) parental involvement is important across the child's school career (though secondary schools consistently report fewer contacts with parents on academic issues); (2) the changing nature of families has influenced the means and frequency by which schools and families communicate; (3) schools differ widely in the level and form of parent involvement (see Johnson 1990, for teacher comments on some differences across private and public school settings); (4) site-specific planning is needed to develop and implement parent involvement programs and activities (schools and families differ in their preferences and needs for programs and involvement options); (5) parents in every type of school and with every type of

[2] Holliday (1988) and Henderson (1981) are cited, with the latter study emphasized for its review of thirty previous research studies.

child want "clear communication about their children's attendance, behavior, academic progress, the curriculum, and how to help their children at home." (p. 59) Teachers are credible and valued sources of information on children's learning and development, and are sought out for suggestions on home applications of academic and disciplinary activities.

Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987), in a study of parent involvement in elementary schools, found that teacher efficacy (the teacher's belief that s/he can teach, that students can learn, and that s/he has access to professional knowledge as needed) was significantly correlated with perceptions of parent support and of parent-teacher conferences. The authors note that efficacy reflects confidence in one's teaching and the instructional program. Confidence can enhance the teacher's efforts and potentially influence the parent's sense of the teacher's credibility. School SES also was highly correlated with such variables as parent-teacher conferences, the involvement of parent volunteers, and perceptions of parent support.

The authors conclude that "the importance of principal efforts to increase teacher efficacy as a means of improving parent-teacher relations" (p. 432) is implied by their findings. In addition they advocate for "increased efforts to improve shared responsibility between home and schools serving predominantly low-income families" focusing on "specific, task-related parent-child involvement at home." (p.432)

Iverson, Brownlee, and Walberg (1981) considered the importance of home involvement on a child's academic progress. Taking note of previous research that estimates from 25–50 percent of the variance in children's achievement scores is related to home and social environments, the authors set out to "explore the extent to which teacher contacts with parents are related to reading gains as measured by standardized, normed texts." (p. 394) A school district in its sixth year of voluntary desegregation was studied. The district had created a supplementary reading program that promoted parent-teacher contact. Over the course of the school year, parent-teacher contacts proved to be a (statistically) significant but not powerful influence on gains in achievement. Effects were not uniform across all children. "Young children tend to benefit unreservedly from an increase in contacts, whereas older students, more aware of their standing and more sensitive to peer pressure, may receive no benefit from an increased number of contacts." (p. 396)

Dye (1989) reported on a research project in London, England that promoted involvement of parents in the development of home and school curriculum materials. Parents, representing many cultures and backgrounds, were involved in a number of activities to promote active learning exchanges in the home. The knowledge and life experiences of the parents were integrated into

many activities within the school. Effects on children and adults were monitored. Parents became more knowledgeable about school programs and voiced an increased interest in further contacts. The parents enjoyed the home-based activities, especially the opportunity to talk and play with their children. The children were tested on academic and social skills, with clear benefits from parental involvement reported.

The importance of parental involvement in preschool programs has been widely studied. One interesting study centering on preschool programs considered the actual communication between parents and teachers. Powell (1978) considered the following variables: Teacher (years of formal education, teacher's age, special training, years of formal experience with preschool children, years since completion of university education, role function, role concept, and communicative attitudes), Parent (socioeconomic status, length of involvement with the preschool, previous use of the preschool, distance of school from home or work site, family composition, communicative attitudes, and perceived influence of the preschool on the child), and Parent-Teacher Communication (frequency and diversity). Gathering data on eighty-nine preschool teachers, the author reported that "both communication frequency and diversity are most strongly correlated with teacher role function, role concept, years of formal education, and friendship relationships with parents." (p. 338) Age of the teacher, years of formal education, and amount of special trained did not predict with the frequency or diversity of teacher communication.

A total of 212 parents produced the following results: "Parent communication **frequency**[3] is positively related to the attitude that parent and teacher should discuss family information, use of the preschool for six months or less, active participation in an informal social network of parents using the same center, and representing a two-parent household." (p. 339) Several of the listed variables did not predict diversity of communication. Powell was successful in establishing that parent-teacher communication is complex and is influenced by factors (teacher and parent) that a teacher can understand and control to enhance communication with parents.

This study guide is replete with studies that, individually and collectively, could be used to justify parent involvement and effective parent-teacher communication. However, one author, Seefeldt (1985), urged teachers to recognize some very real limits to an increased emphasis on parental involvement. Granting that benefits can occur for all parents, Seefeldt took notice of the physical and emotional limits of parents and teachers. Any school wishing to promote more active parental involvement would do well to recognize that parents already may feel overwhelmed by the

[3] Emphasis in original.

expectations of the teacher or school administrator. Schools that are sensitive to existing pressures and restraints facing parents could help by offering parents clear choices for involvement as well as support for implementing any action that would benefit the child or school. For example, responsibilities to younger children may restrict a parent's opportunities to become involved in any of a number of school functions; the availability of babysitting within the school may allow that parent to attend activities and contribute to the development and implementation of programs for children.

Training Teachers to Work with Families

Involvement with parents in conferences is only one form of parent-teacher contact. Many teachers readily become involved in conferences yet most professionals recognize that opportunities seldom arise in conferences to work with the family. The goals of a conference and the time within which the teacher works with a parent permit little attention to other topics of interest to participants. The options for working with families explored in this course will alert teachers to important choices that they have when faced with a family situation that could benefit from support services. The larger question to be raised is whether current and future teachers are provided, through their training, with the knowledge and skills that they need to interpret information that they have about a child or family.

Sarason, Davidson, and Blatt (1986), in a revision to their 1962 text on teacher preparation, took note of the many changes that had occurred since the release of the original text. The problems in society and schools had become more complex over the years, yet the form and function of teacher preparation have not consistently reflected those problems. Sarason (1990 a, b) is not sanguine about many of the reforms that schools are considering, but remains committed to a process of questioning the reasons by which we justify the structure and process of our schools. He recognizes that while the needs of children and families have changed, teachers are not prepared, without extensive support, to meet the needs that students present on a daily basis.[4]

Rosenberg, O'Shea, and O'Shea (1991), while proposing means of training special education teachers, consider parent involvement mainly in terms of legal mandates for participation. Mastery of the tasks of successful teaching is conceived in terms of instruction and management, two functions central to teacher-child relationships. Parents are essential players in permitting their

[4] Sarason (1972, 1974) considers the broader context of the community and the opportunities available to deliver services to families in a coordinated effort reflecting the resources of the community.

children to become involved in special programs, yet few avenues to influence those programs are available in many current models of service delivery.

Skrtic (1991) recognizes the limitations of special education programs in meeting the ideals of PL 94–142 and subsequent implementation guidelines. Recent calls for a shift in special education to permit more mainstreaming of children into the regular class share the same underlying assumptions and premises as those guiding current practices, Skrtic argues. Regardless of one's agreement with Skrtic's arguments, the structure that special education has created to foster parental involvement has the potential of steering parents into well-defined interactions and situations that the parent had little voice in shaping.

The work of training all teachers begins at the pre-service level and extends throughout the career of each professional. The knowledge and skills that the professional takes into the classroom on the first day of employment continue to be refined over the course of a career. A great deal of attention has been given to the means by which teachers make decisions and solve problem (cf. Jackson 1990; Schon 1991). Recognition that parents are all-important consumers of educational services (Powell and Solity 1990) can motivate educators to attend to the needs and preferences of parents. In the process of working with parents, changes in the attitudes and actions of teachers can enhance parent-teacher communication and involvement.

What training programs can do to prepare future educators seems obvious: prepare teachers for the realities of parent-teacher involvement. That task, while simple on the surface, contains many elements that are not part of traditional training, which emphasizes teacher involvement with children.

Lieberman and Miller (1990) discuss the cognitive and affective missions of teachers as they serve children. Cognitive (e.g., helping students learn) and affective (e.g., motivating students, helping them relate to peers and adults) goals are essential for guiding children toward greater mastery of their world. Parallel goals that the teacher could maintain for parents appear as essential. Parents want to know about their children's progress and what they, the parent, can do to stimulate, encourage, and guide learning (and interest in learning).

Lieberman and Miller make a statement worth considering: "Unlike other professionals who look to colleagues and supervisors for such feedback [on whether they are doing a good job and are appreciated], teachers can only turn to children." (p. 154) Teachers, even of young children, seek verbal and nonverbal confirmation of their effectiveness. Children seldom are fluent in providing affirmative feedback, and may not recognize our needs for confirmation of efforts. Parents, on the

other hand, are adults with ongoing responsibilities to children, and can understand our needs for a kind word or statement of support from time to time. Yet schools, with traditional expectations of parent-teacher involvement, provide very few opportunities for adults to exchange information about education, childrearing, and other topics around which parents and teachers share common interests.

Lieberman and Miller refer to teaching as a lonely profession, one in which the teacher is largely out of the sight and control of other adults. Children, as already noted, are often unaware of adult needs and feelings, and, thus, provide support and encouragement only on terms they can recognize. Parents, while kept from the confines of the classroom on most occasions, are potential cheerleaders for teacher efforts. Our credibility as educators is at stake if we can not attract the attention, support, and respect of the parents of the children we serve.

Are schools successful in attracting parent support? Yes, if we believe the yearly polls on education provided by the Gallup organization. In the 23rd Annual Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools (Elam, Rose, and Gallup 1991), American parents continue a pattern of supporting their local schools and educators, while expressing doubts about the schools and educators in the remainder of the nation. Local schools, available to the scrutiny of parents, are considered generally effective in delivering needed academic services. Teachers, thus, have succeeded in establishing important elements of credibility in their communities, while failing to convince a national sample of Americans that schools are succeeding in their basic mission. Why the discrepancy? In part, the view shared by many citizens about the condition of schools is a reflection of the visibility of the schools in political discussion today and the means by which public opinion is manipulated to achieve political agendas (Goldfarb 1991). Observers of public opinion on school quality note that cycles of support and of despair are characteristic of public reaction to the efforts of the schools (Sarason 1990a).

Given the support of the public for local schools and their teachers and the lack of recognition and feedback that teachers experience by being largely unobserved in their work, why are many schools lagging in their efforts to increase parent involvement? The reasons are multiple and include several of the points made earlier in this chapter. For example, teachers are not unified in their support of parental involvement. Perceptions vary as to the usefulness or benefit (to the teacher, parent, or child) of increased parental input to a child's educational program.

Schools as large organizations have a number of priorities relating to their responsibilities to the community. School administrators are as likely to promote a public relations program as they are to

encourage new means of parent-teacher involvement (Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher 1990). Interest groups in the community are many and diverse, attracting the attention of administrators and placing the issue of parental involvement as just one more agenda item to be addressed as time permits.

Lieberman and Miller (1990), in discussing classroom teaching, argued that one difficulty facing educators was the lack of consensus "about what is basic to the practice of the profession." (p. 154) Goals of education were viewed as being vague and conflicting. A similar argument could be made for parent-teacher involvement. The spirit is willing in many teachers and parents, but the direction to take such involvement (to its greatest effectiveness and impact on the lives of children) is, at best, unclear and, at worst, lacking. Differences in values and in opinions about methods of education can slow the process of negotiating new and expanded forms of parental input and involvement. Public schools, more so than their counterparts in the private sector, are subject to the whims and diversity of opinions represented by their communities (Chubb and Moe 1990). Johnson (1990) provides anecdotal examples on differences in parental influence between public and private schools.

The complex nature of operating schools and accommodating teacher, parent, and child interests is addressed in university training programs and schools or colleges of education. While opinions vary widely about the merits of the training provided by such schools and colleges (see Clifford and Guthrie's 1988 account about the state of American schools of education), Sarason (1990b) has argued that "[S]chools of education must assume leadership in relationship to diverse community groups and institutions, in a way that makes clear that responsibility is shared." (p. 62) Sarason is addressing an important element of today's schools: children come with a variety of needs and problems that the school was never intended to remedy, but now finds itself confronting with limited support from the community and human service agencies. Sarason is convinced that schools, as part of the broader community, cannot attempt to "go it alone" and serve children by patching together what is at best a Band-Aid when what is needed is immediate and concerted attention to the family. As Herbers (1991) has stated, "[t]here will be no magic until we do something about the millions of children living in wretched homes." (p. 74)

If schools are to address the needs of the community, then means must be found to assess those needs and to coordinate services that provide for the long-term development of children. Sarason, in focusing attention on schools of education, is arguing that our universities and colleges are in a position of leadership concerning issues central to education, and have the resources to investigate

new methods of service that reflect the collaboration of all parties with a stake in the education of children. Obvious stakeholders include the family, the school (and its staff), and the community within which the child will assume eventual responsibilities as an adult.

Colleges and universities can accomplish many goals in their efforts to improve educational systems. If one goal consists of preparing educators to provide improved forms of parent-teacher involvement, then programs must explore the means by which novice teachers emerge from their training with both the commitment and skills to engage parents in cooperative endeavors. If we continue to be satisfied, as Krumm (1989) has argued, with limiting parental contacts to obligatory rituals (e.g., open house activities), we cannot expect parents to believe us when we state that we value their input as we seek their support during a crisis. Trainers can work to shape the attitudes and expectations of beginning teachers so that they emerge into the schools with a clear sense of the value of parent involvement and the tools to open and maintain dialogue with the families they serve.

Closing Comments

This lesson began with the assumption that parent-teacher involvement was essential to the attainment of many of the goals of education. Throughout the remainder of the course, the same assumption will underlie many of the instructor's arguments and proposals. Yet, in completing these introductory comments, the instructor recognizes that the reader may need a more elaborate rationale to justify use of the many techniques described in the next several lessons. Thus, several points to note are offered:

1. When faced with the pressures of operating in a classroom, teachers seldom have the luxury of stepping back and reflecting on the value of each option available to use with children or adults. Perception of the availability of options rests on an awareness of possibilities, followed by the expertise in summoning the necessary knowledge and skills essential to successful application. Reflection on strategies and tactics can motivate the teacher to attempt modified or novel forms of service;
2. Teachers at the pre-service level can be trained to cope with the responsibilities of working with children and their parents. Trainers of novice and veteran teachers can offer a wealth of knowledge and practice on strategies for working with parents;
3. In-service training of teachers is common across the United States. If such training is to foster professional growth and development, one area of emphasis can be parent-teacher involvement. Training teachers to encourage new avenues of parent involvement is

practical and has immediate consequences (Lieberman and Miller 1990): teachers and parents benefit from their contact;

4. Teachers control the use of any and all of the available techniques and strategies for increased involvement with parents. Even if a district mandates specific forms of contact (e.g., conferences), the teacher maintains control over the content and process of each encounter. In the broader arena of options to use during communication with parents, each teacher controls (a) the use of any single form of a technique, (2) the combination of all available techniques during an encounter, and (3) the pace by which an exchange proceeds. As noted earlier, teachers and parents face many responsibilities, each of which can draw attention away from activities in the school. Teachers and parents share a common responsibility for negotiating the means by which they will collaborate. All parties have the option of requesting re-negotiation on the time, place, and content of any meeting.

Taken together, the points above support a teacher's perception that s/he is a professional, with the expertise to define priorities for action and determine the optimal means for achieving those priorities. The remainder of the course will identify the tools available to assist the teacher interested in fostering parental involvement.

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WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #1

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **BEFORE** beginning the written assignment, **READ** Chapters 1 and 4 in the textbook and the above discussion
- **SELECT** a total of two activities from the following lists, one from Chapter 1 and one from Chapter 4.
- **SUBMIT** a typed summary of your findings or conclusions after completing both activities. This assignment is worth 60 points. Responses are to be returned together.

Chapter 1 Activity List (select one only)

a. Survey a preschool, elementary school, or junior high/middle school, or high school in your area to find out how the school involves parents.

b. Invite a social worker to discuss the problems involved in foster home and institutional placements

c. Visit a Head Start center. How are parents involved in the program?

d. Defend the importance of parents as teachers of their own children and parents as partners with the school.

e. Interview a parent who has been an active volunteer in a preschool or school classroom. Report on the parent's perceptions of school priorities for parent involvement.

f. Discuss the importance of Hunt's book Intelligence and Experience. How has it helped change the belief in fixed IQ?

g. Critique Berger and Riojas-Cortez's summary of the research on attachment. How are both parents important to the infant?

Chapter 4 Activity List (select one only)

a. Review books from art museums. Examine these for trends in childrearing practices and beliefs.

b. Concern about the poor was strongest during the 1890s, the early twentieth century, the 1930s, and the 1960s. What were the differing causes of poverty? How has poverty affected relations between the school and the family?

c. Examine the origins of nursery schools in England and the United States. Discuss family needs and their influence on services.

d. Examine your community. Consider programs that have begun since Head Start was initiated in 1965.

e. Discuss federal intervention affecting services to children and families. How and why has federal involvement changed since 1910?

Checklist Activity

As a means of becoming familiar with schools or organizing your thoughts about schools, please consider completing the four checklists reprinted on the pages at the end of this lesson. I would be happy to hear your reactions to what you have learned when you submit your written assignment in this lesson. Completing the checklists is an optional assignment.

Submit Written Assignment #1 electronically via the ICON Dropbox (**"Written Assignment #1"** folder).

- Complete and submit your assignment BEFORE moving on to the following lesson.
- Instructions on **how to upload your assignment** to the ICON Dropbox are provided on the course site (Content > Assignments).

Checklist #1 Key Characteristics of Your School [5]

This checklist is designed to help you to assess your school's assets and liabilities. For each category, we have added an "Other." Use this space to add things we might have missed. Some of the things on this checklist you can change; others you cannot.

Flag your problem areas by filling in the boxes following categories in which you find a lot of negative answers. The checklists that follow, based on the principles of partnership schools, will give you ideas on how to overcome your liabilities.

A. Physical characteristics of your school: (Select "Y" for "yes" or "N" for "no.")

Y or N	Does it look well kept?
Y or N	Is there an obvious entranceway?
Y or N	Are the grounds well tended?
Y or N	Is there a place for parents to park at night when they visit the school?
Y or N	Is the playground/recreation area well equipped and safe?
Y or N	Is there a library?
Y or N	Is there an adequate lunchroom?
Y or N	Other

☐ Is this a problem area for you? If so, check this box.

B. Location of your school: (Select "Y" for "yes" or "N" for "no.")

Y or N	Do most of your families work within 30 minutes (by car) of the school?
Y or N	Do most of your families live within 10 minutes (by car) of the school?
Y or N	Is there adequate public transportation to and from the school?
Y or N	Do parents and teachers feel safe in the area around the school?
Y or N	Other

☐ Is this a problem area? If so, check the box.

C. Relations of the school with the community

Y or N	Does your staff tend to have the same ethnic and social background as the families in your school?
Y or N	Do you consider the turnover rate of your staff high?
Y or N	Has there been more than one principal in the last five years?
Y or N	Do most of your children live in the immediate neighborhood?
Y or N	Have there been any significant political battles about the school in recent years?
Y or N	Other

☐ Is this a problem area? If so, check the box.

[5] Materials from Henderson, A. T., C. L. Marburger, and T. Ooms. 1986. Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents. Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education. Reprinted by permission of the Center for Law and Education.

D. The school facility as a resource to the community

Y or N	Is it open after school hours for visits or meetings?
Y or N	Is there a community playground on the school grounds?
Y or N	Is it available and used for community events or community education?
Y or N	Is it a polling place on election day?
Y or N	Does the school sponsor events for the community?
Y or N	Does it provide space for daycare or after-school care?
Y or N	Are school resources and equipment available for community use (e.g., sports equipment, gymnasium, costumes, laboratories)?
Y or N	Other

☐ Is this a problem area? If so, check the box.

E. The school's reputation in the community

Y or N	Is it known for a strong academic program?
Y or N	Is it generally thought of as a "good" school?
Y or N	Is it free from chronic discipline problems and vandalism?
Y or N	Do many of the families in your attendance area use private or parochial schools?
Y or N	Does it offer a variety of nonacademic and extracurricular programs, both during and after school?
Y or N	Other

☐ Is this a problem area? If so, check the box.

F. Special features for which the school is known: (indicate any that apply)

Y or N	Team teaching
Y or N	Open classrooms
Y or N	Tracking by ability and performance
Y or N	Smaller schools within the school
Y or N	Special and compensatory education programs
Y or N	Magnet programs
Y or N	Other strong programs (drama, music, sports, arts, etc.)
Y or N	Other

Checklist #2 Key Characteristics of Families in Your School

This checklist is designed to help you identify special characteristics of your school's families, and to alert you to issues that may need priority consideration and attention. If the data are not available from registration cards or surveys, try an educated guess.

Once you have identified the special needs of your families, the following checklists should give you some ideas about how, or whether, to address them.

A. What proportion of students come from the following: (estimate a percentage)

_____ single-parent households
_____ two-parent households
_____ foster homes or institutions
_____ nonparent households (relatives or guardians)

B. What proportion of children have ever experienced a serious disruption (separation, divorce, or death) in the family? (select one)

☐ less than 25 percent
☐ about half
☐ the great majority

C. What is the economic/educational status of the families? (estimate a percentage)

_____ proportion below poverty level (or eligible for free lunch program)
_____ proportion with at least one college-educated parent
_____ proportion owning at least one automobile
_____ proportion with telephone at home
_____ proportion that have undergone serious economic stress within the last two years

D. What is the racial/cultural background of the families?

_____ proportion of racial minorities (estimate a percentage)
_____ number of different languages spoken by parents (and identify which ones)
_____ proportion from cultural or religious minorities to which school should be sensitive (diet, holidays, medical issues, etc.) (estimate a percentage)

E. What proportion of children live in families where both parents, or the custodial parent, is employed outside the home for most of the school day?

_____ less than 25 percent
_____ about half
_____ the great majority

F. How many children are left unsupervised for long periods before or after school? (check one)

☐ less than 25 percent
☐ about half
☐ the great majority

G. What proportion of families is new to the community this year? (check one)

☐ less than 25 percent
☐ about half
☐ the great majority

H. What proportion of children is handicapped or in need of special education? (check one)

☐ less than 10 percent
☐ less than 25 percent
☐ about half

Checklist #3 Assessing the Family-School Relationship

Principle #1: School Climate (Select "Y" for "yes" or "N" for "no.")

Y or N	Do office personnel greet parents (in person or on the phone) in a friendly, courteous way?
Y or N	Do posted signs warmly welcome parents and visitors?
Y or N	Are there directions (written or posted) for parents and visitors to find their way around the school?
Y or N	Is there a comfortable reception area for parents and visitors, equipped with a coat rack and information about the school?
Y or N	Is there an orientation program for the incoming class of students and their families?
Y or N	Is there a program for helping midyear transfer students and their families to settle in the school? (For example, is a staff member assigned to be their "host"?)
Y or N	Are there regular social occasions or events where parents and staff member can get to know each other?
Y or N	Does the principal have clearly posted office hours when parents and students can drop in to talk?
Y or N	Does the school permit parents to observe in class?
Y or N	Does the school have an "Open Door" policy, where parents are welcome at any time during the school day?
Y or N	Other

Principle #2: Communication

Y or N	Is there a school newsletter with up-to-date information about holidays, special events, etc.
Y or N	Does the school send home a calendar listing dates of parent-teacher conferences, report cards, holiday schedules, and major events?
Y or N	Does the school send home a directory of key PTA representatives and school personnel, with phone numbers?
Y or N	Does the school hold annual back-to-school nights/open houses?
Y or N	Does the school have a hot line for parents and students to deal with emergencies, rumors, and other "burning questions"?
Y or N	Do your policies encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, grading policies, and how they should help?
Y or N	Do parents know where to go with their concerns, questions, and complaints?
Y or N	Does the principal review all the school's written communications, including report care format and how test results are reported, to make sure they are respectful of a parent's adult status and yet easy to understand?
Y or N	Are parents informed of their rights? This includes access to school records, due process in disciplinary actions, and participation in special education decisions.
Y or N	Other

Principle #3: Parents as Collaborators and Problem Solvers

Y or N	Does the school require at least one parent/teacher conference each year for each student?
Y or N	Does the school offer to set up teacher-parent conferences upon request?
Y or N	Does the school provide in-service training or other opportunities to help teachers communicate and collaborate with parents?
Y or N	Is there an early warning policy where teachers consult with parents promptly if a child is falling behind or having social behavior problems?
Y or N	Does the school inform parents right away if a student doesn't show up for school? Are parents promptly consulted if there is a pattern of unexcused absences? (A "yes" to both parts of the question qualifies as a "yes" answer.)
Y or N	Does the elementary school confer with parents on the choice of classroom settings and/or teacher?
Y or N	Does the high school require parent approval on a student's choice of courses?
Y or N	Are training and resources (such as a parent advocate) provided for parents of special education students to help them participate in the Individualized Education Plan and other processes?
Y or N	Other

Principle #4: Parents as Advisors and Decision Makers

Y or N	Does the school publish and keep current a policy handbook for parents and students that covers discipline, absences, homework, dress standards, parent and student rights, etc.
Y or N	If the school needs to develop a new policy or program, is there a mechanism for obtaining parent input?
Y or N	Is there a parent-teacher organization that meets at least once a month?
Y or N	Do parents ever approach the principal on their own initiative to question general school policy or procedures, aside from situations that affect only their child?
Y or N	When a problem arises at the school, such as a sharp increase in vandalism or drug use or a significant decline in test scores, does the staff inform and enlist the help of parents immediately?
Y or N	Are there established procedures for dealing with parents' demands, especially those of a vocal minority?
Y or N	Other

Principle #5: Outreach to All Families

Y or N	Is there a policy for informing noncustodial parents about their children's performance and school events?
Y or N	Do teachers sometimes meet outside school hours with parents who have jobs and cannot easily get away during the working day?
Y or N	Does the school hold evening and weekend events for its families so that employed parents (mothers, fathers, others) can come to see the school?
Y or N	Is there a substantial minority language population at the school, are written communications provided in that language?

Y or N	Is there in-service training offered for teachers on how to deal with problems caused by divorce or separation, such as how to avoid being caught between warring parents, or the impact of family breakup on children?
Y or N	Are there any special programs, such as peer-group discussions, for students whose parents are separating, divorced, or deceased?
Y or N	Is there an outreach program for parents—especially minority groups—who do not participate at all in school events, e.g., where faculty or parent volunteers are willing to make home visits or attend church meetings to answer questions, allay fears, and explain the importance of being involved in their children's education?
Y or N	When a particular parent refuses to cooperate with the principal or teacher, is there a school staff member trained to intervene and work with that parent?
Y or N	Other

Principle #6: Promoting a Philosophy of Partnership

Y or N	Does the school have a written statement about partnership with parents that is clearly available, especially in all written publications?
Y or N	Are there in-service opportunities for training teachers to work with parents?
Y or N	Is time at staff meetings devoted to discussing working with parents and to reinforce teachers' efforts with parents?
Y or N	Are teachers encouraged to consult with the principal if they are having difficulty dealing with a parent?
Y or N	Does the principal offer to sit in at meetings with teachers and parents or to mediate any dispute between them?
Y or N	Does the principal substitute in the classroom or make substitutes available to allow teachers and other staff to have meetings with parents?
Y or N	Does the school offer assistance to help parents with babysitting, transportation, or other logistical difficulties, so that they may attend school events?
Y or N	Are space, resources, and staff support (e.g., reasonable access to a copying machine, typing services, a desk) provided for parents' school-related activities?
Y or N	Other

Principle #7: Volunteer Participation

Y or N	Does the school have an organized volunteer program with a coordinator (paid or volunteer)?
Y or N	Does the program draw from retired people, the business community, local citizens, and students, as well as parents?
Y or N	Is there a wide variety of jobs available for volunteers, including ones that could be done at home or on weekends"
Y or N	Are all parents expected to volunteer in some way during the school year?
Y or N	Is the program reassessed periodically, with the participation of parents, teachers, and other volunteers, to ensure that the program is meeting school needs effectively?
Y or N	Are local businesses and community organizations contacted to provide learning opportunities outside the school and to explore career options for high school students?
Y or N	Has a local business (or other institution) been asked to "adopt" your school?
Y or N	Other

Checklist #4 Assessing the Parent-Teacher Relationship

Principle #1: Classroom Climate (Select "Y" for "yes" or "N" for "no.")

Y or N Are parent observers welcome in the classroom?
Y or N Are there adult-sized chairs, besides the teacher's?
Y or N Is the classroom organized so that a parent can see what happens in it easily?
Y or N Are examples of every child's work displayed regularly?
Y or N Is the classroom routine written down and clearly posted?
Y or N Other

Principle #2: Communication

Y or N Are parents informed at the beginning of the year how they can reach the teacher?
Y or N Does the teacher tell parents about the good things, as well as problems?
Y or N Does the teacher try to communicate at least once a month with each family (less often in high school, but regularly)?
Y or N Does the teacher talk to parents in person (or on the phone), in addition to sending written messages?
Y or N Does the teacher provide regular opportunities for parents to see their child's written work?
Y or N Does the teacher let parents know of expectations for homework, grading policies, and how parents can help?
Y or N Does the teacher let parents know what information about the child is needed to help teachers do a better job (e.g., family stress or major changes in family—illness, birth, death, divorce, etc.)?
Y or N Other

Principle #3: Parents as Collaborators

Y or N Do teachers ask parents for their advice on how to deal with their children?
Y or N Is there an early warning system for notifying parents if a student is falling behind and/or having social problems, so that teachers might confer with them about the situation?
Y or N Before parents are informed about a serious problem, are other school staff consulted to gather their perspectives on the student?
Y or N Are parents encouraged to advise teachers when a child is exhibiting a learning or school adjustment difficulty at home?
Y or N In suggesting ways that parents can help at home, does the teacher take into account a student's particular background and situation?
Y or N Do teachers make it clear to parents that parents must respect their need for time alone and with their own families?
Y or N Do teachers help parents understand that their child's needs must be balanced with those of the whole class?
Y or N Other

Principle #4: Parents as Advisors and Decision Makers

Y or N Are parents with questions and ideas about school policy encouraged to play an active role in the school?
Y or N Do teachers attend parent-teacher organization meetings regularly?
Y or N Do teachers listen actively to parents' concerns and pass them on to the principal and/or the parent-teacher organization president?
Y or N Do teachers make it clear that some decisions about a child are not negotiable (e.g., grades, promotion)?
Y or N Other

Principle #5: Outreach to All Families

Y or N Are teachers adequately trained and supported in their dealings with the problems of divorced families?
Y or N Do teachers make special efforts to reach families from other cultures (e.g., home visits, translators)?
Y or N Do teachers meet outside regular school hours, if necessary, with parents who are employed?
Y or N Are teachers persistent in their efforts to reach parents who try to avoid coming to school?
Y or N Will teachers make a home visit if that is the only way to meet a parent?
Y or N Other

Principle #6: Volunteers

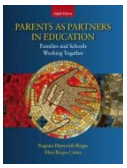
Y or N Do teachers use volunteers creatively (both parents and other citizens) to meet needs in the classroom?
Y or N Do teachers expect every parent to help in some way, and are parents offered a variety of ways to do so?
Y or N Other

LESSON 2 – BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Chapters 5 and 6



Lesson Overview

This lesson includes both a summary of research on parent involvement and an overview of basic communication skills that form the basis of all encounters with parents. You will be guided through a rationale for applying these skills during parent-teacher contacts.

A great deal of work has gone on in schools to support opportunities for parents to work with children and school staff. Opportunities for involvement have occurred at all levels of local schools and will all varieties of children. Discussion Section 1 of this lesson will provide summaries of investigations on the impact of parent involvement. The Berger and Riojas-Cortez text addresses similar investigations.

The intent of basic communication skills is to provide a listener with information that will be received accurately; the same skills are equally important for assisting you, as listener, to receive information with accuracy. During an exchange of information, both parties benefit from understanding the message of the other party.

Discussion Section 2 considers essential techniques for effective communication. Materials used in the on-campus version of the course are provided in this lesson. CDI and video-recorded examples of the skills are available to independent study students (see below). The following skills are denoted as core to communication with parents:

- nonverbal attending
- minimal encouragement
- open/closed questions
- paraphrasing
- perception check
- reflection of feeling

Optional Video Assignment

The optional video, "Examples of Interviewing Skills," should have been provided to you upon your enrollment. After viewing the video, which contains examples of basic communication techniques, you may write the instructor to provide examples of individual techniques during parent-teacher

communication. For example, a parent or a teacher could list how individual skills were used during a recent discussion of a child's progress. You can report examples of either the parent's or teacher's communication strategies. The assignment is intended to provide you with an opportunity to receive feedback on your understanding of basic communication techniques used during parent-teacher encounters. If completing the optional assignment, please send your report to the instructor at the following address:

Discussion

Section 1: Impact of Parental Involvement

Karen Wikelund has provided valuable information on efforts, across the United States, which have been devoted to enhance parent-teacher communication. The following materials provide a shorthand summary of her findings.[6]

"Givens" in Parent Involvement

There are fundamental principles that underlie any successful parent involvement effort. They are so basic that they should not have to be stated. However, if the participants in parent involvement do not share these beliefs, their efforts will be doomed to failure. These "givens" include the following:

- The focus is on the child and his/her success.
- All children can learn.
- Parents want the best for their children.
- The school cannot do it alone.
- Parents, regardless of ethnic group, socioeconomic status or educational background, are a key resource in their children's education.
- Together as partners, schools, families and communities can succeed in educating children to be able to lead happy, healthy, productive lives.

Types of Parent Involvement

"Parent involvement" can encompass a vast range of activities, from something as simple as signing a report card to the complex commitment of chairing a school governance committee, which has

[6] Wikelund's conclusions are described in more detail in her publication: Wikelund, K. R. 1990. Schools and communities working together: A guide to parent involvement. Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

authority to determine curriculum and hire and fire staff. Parents can play many different roles in their child's education. Each is important.

Researchers and trainers have categorized parent involvement in diverse ways. Basically, the types of involvement include the following:

- fulfilling **basic parental obligations** for a child's education and social development at home;
- taking an active role in **home learning activities**—collaborating with teachers (monitoring homework, tutoring, etc.);
- being an **audience** for school events;
- being a **participant and supporter** of school events and programs;
- being a **learner** (participating in training offered through the school, whether on ways to be more involved, on parenting skills, or to improve basic skills, for example);
- volunteering or being paid to be a **classroom aide or provide other assistance at school**;
- being an **advocate** for the school and school programs in the community;
- being an **advisor or decision-maker** (serving on a board or committee with responsibility to advise school leaders and/or help make school governance decisions).

Benefits of Parent Involvement

Studies of parent involvement programs overwhelmingly confirm a positive relationship between parent involvement and children's schooling, particularly achievement. Schools with well-structured, consistent parent involvement programs have experienced benefits in a variety of areas.

Students experience improvements in

- achievement
- motivation and attitudes (toward school; homework; teachers; etc.),
- behavior,
- attendance,
- self-concept,
- suspension rates for disciplinary reasons,
- communication with teachers and parents/families.

Teachers and administrators experience improvements in

- morale (and self-esteem),
- teaching effectiveness (proficiency),
- job satisfaction,
- communication/relations with students and with parents, families, and communities,
- cost-effectiveness (parents will spend more time with individual students than teachers can),
- community support of schools.

Parents also experience improvements in

- communication/relations with children and teachers,
- self-esteem,
- educational level/skills,
- decision-making skills.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Common barriers to effective parent involvement include the following:

- Parent involvement is not well understood, not highly valued, and thus not well implemented. It is largely limited to traditional activities, such as participation in school events.
- Schools of education do not provide training in parent involvement.
- During the school year, little time is available for staff development and parent involvement is not a high priority for training.
- Teachers may feel overworked (and underpaid) and may not wish to spend extra time and energy contacting and interacting with parents.
- Teachers' unions and/or school district regulations may indirectly discourage teachers from spending extra time with parents.
- State and district policies may limit provision of information to noncustodial parents.
- Most communication tends to be one-way, from the school to the home.
- Most contacts between school and home are negative (communication only occurs in response to crises).

- Teachers and administrators may have low or negative expectations of low-income and minority families and communities.
- Teachers and administrators may view low-income and minority parents as hard-to-reach.
- Teachers and parents often prefer different times for meetings.
- Teachers may feel parents aren't interested or don't know how to be supportive.
- Teachers may feel threatened or fear interference by parents in their classrooms.
- There may be serious social class differences between families and school personnel.
- Low-income or minority parents may have had negative experiences with schooling and may have low or negative expectations of themselves and their children and distrust of schools.
- Parents may not understand what the schools except of them—what their roles and responsibilities are.
- Parents may not feel welcome at school.
- Working parents have limited time and energy.
- Parents can lack transportation or childcare.
- Organizational change is difficult and slow.

Key Players in Successful Parent Involvement Programs

Parent involvement is truly a team effort. To be effective, all of the following players must believe in the potential of parent involvement efforts and participate to the fullest in them:

- **strong school administrative leaders**—who understand, encourage and fully support parent involvement;
- **teachers**—who are committed to working closely with parents in a variety of capacities;
- **outreach staff**—who are well-respected by the school and the community and who conduct intensive personal outreach to families;
- **parents and family members**—who understand their potential influence and are ready to contribute actively to their children's education;
- **community members** (including businesses and community organizations)—who are willing to support the role of parents and families in education;
- **children**—who understand why their parents or other family members are involved with their schooling, see their school and families and community as a supportive team working with them, and are willing to play a responsible role in their own education.

Teachers and Parent Involvement

Teachers are a pivotal link in establishing and maintaining solid parent involvement efforts. Without teachers who are actively committed to encouraging parents in the important roles they can play, schools will have a difficult time recruiting parents and keeping them involved.

As a teacher, you

- maintain high expectations for every child to learn and achieve.
- examine your own assumptions about ability and interest (based on behavior, nonstandard English or lack of English, physical appearance or family background) and remain alert to negative images.
- take time to get to know the community (or communities) represented by the children you teach—the history of their interactions with the school, their values and customs, local heroes, favorite pastimes, child-rearing practices, worries and aspirations.
- treat all children and their families with respect.
- welcome every family into your classroom and make them feel comfortable in the school.
- establish and maintain open, 2-way communication with parents and other family members: (1) contact the parents of all children regularly, for positive as well as negative reasons; (2) establish regular times when parents can contact you.
- provide a variety of options for parents to collaborate with you in the teaching of their children (including homework activities, class projects, volunteer work in the classroom and on field trips, fundraising, etc.).
- participate in staff training about parent involvement.
- participate in school activities designed to help staff and families get to know each other.
- view cultural diversity as a resource and teach children to value it.
- identify and use ways to validate children's experiences outside of school and incorporate them into instructional activities.
- collaborate with other professionals and parents to address particular children's learning or emotional problems.
- take stock of your parent involvement activities regularly, with input from other key players, and revise them as necessary.
- never give up on any child.

Parent Involvement: Outreach Strategies That Work

Once you have reached out to request parent and family input, there are a variety of other strategies you can use to establish and maintain communication with as many families as possible:

- regular personal phone calls from teachers and/or administrative staff to parents, for positive as well as negative reasons;
- 24-hour telephone message recorders, so parents can leave messages for teachers any time of day or night;
- 24-hour recorded message service, so parents and students can call for school announcements and messages on topics of particular concern;
- dial-your-assignment recordings, so students and parents can call in at any time to check on homework assignments without having to speak directly to the teacher;
- dial-a-teacher—selected teachers are available for questions on homework over the phone during certain hours of weekday evenings;
- homework hotline (TV or radio call-in show for help on homework or on specific subjects, or phone line to school, library, or other location—run by teachers, aides, students, parents or community members);
- parenting hotline (phone hotline or radio call-in show for advice on specific parenting issues).

Recruitment Strategies: Reaching Parents

Here are some common, and perhaps not so common, ways to recruit parents for parent involvement activities:

- send fliers home (see samples);
- publicize through school and local newsletters and neighborhood newspapers;
- use local popular radio and television programs to announce the activities;
- use publicly respected figures to invite participation;
- identify other appropriate public forums in the communities you want to involve, such as churches, social service clubs, recreational facilities, shopping centers, Laundromats—put announcements in their bulletins and fliers on their bulletin boards or ask representatives of those organizations to make public announcements to encourage participation;

- identify local private businesses and industries that employ many of the parents you wish to reach—request their cooperation with bulletins, announcements, and fliers or notices in paycheck envelopes;
- schedule a community-wide event (rally, reading celebration, etc.) to inaugurate (or renew) your program of activities;
- schedule events and meetings at times appropriate for the community (after you've polled them through a survey or brainstorming meeting or have consulted several community representatives).

Retention Strategies: Keeping Parents Involved

Here are some strategies to help you maintain interest in your parent involvement program:

- Get to know parents as individuals, be friendly and establish personal relationships of trust.
- When approaching parents about their child, always have something positive to share about the child.
- Offer activities that are based on what parents want to know or do (even if that means addressing needs that are not directly school-related).
- Be sensitive to local customs and values and to regular church or club meeting times and special holiday observations (for example, Wednesday night prayer meeting or choir practice, or the 12th of December, the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe).
- Always ask for and accept feedback from all key players.
- Build a sense of ownership in the program by having representatives of all key players participate in planning, reviewing and weighing feedback and revising the program as needed.
- Take pictures (always asking if it's okay, in case parents' legal status or cultural beliefs make it unacceptable) and display them in the classroom, the parents' lounge, the school halls or offices, or in a school/community scrapbook. Seeing pictures of their children and of themselves helps people to identify more personally with the school environment as a place where they belong.
- Frequently show your appreciation for participation and contributions, through display charts or scrapbooks, special tags and ribbons, thank you notes, announced acknowledgments and recognition of volunteers and special efforts.

Essential Ingredients in Parent Involvement

Parent involvement programs that truly have an impact on the students, schools, and families with whom they work share the following characteristics:

- **Parent involvement is a school-wide priority.** This means it has adequate support as well as good intentions. Support includes
    - written school and/or district policies that establish parent involvement as a legitimate and desired activity.
    - sufficient funding so that the parent involvement program can be consistent and maintained over time.
    - leadership and encouragement by the principal and other administrators.
    - staff with time allocated to the coordination of parent involvement activities.
    - staff and parent training.
    - necessary materials and facilities (space and equipment).
    - food, transportation, and childcare as needed for parent meetings.
- **Parent involvement is a community-based effort.** School personnel work in partnership with parents and other community members so that all players have a strong sense of ownership:
    - Types of involvement and activities are planned jointly.
    - Nothing is imposed by the school or the community.
    - School personnel have a good understanding of the community's history, leadership, appropriate role models, appropriate channels of communication.
    - Activities address issues of concern to the community (felt needs).
- **Roles and responsibilities are well defined, but not inflexible.** Training is provided to both staff and parents to help them understand these roles and responsibilities and learn ways to collaborate effectively.
- **There is open, 2-way communication among the various key players.** Administrators, teachers, outreach workers, parents, other community members and children—each have some knowledge of the values and expectations of the other groups of players and of appropriate modes of communication across groups. Players accept and respect diverse viewpoints. There are mechanisms in place to allow and facilitate open communication.

- **There is intensive and ongoing personal outreach to all parents.** Specially trained staff use a variety of media and activities to engage families and other community members.
- **A wide variety of culturally appropriate opportunities are available for parents to become involved.** This is the meat of the program once the other ingredients are in place.
- **All players participate in ongoing evaluation and revision of activities.**

Essential Ingredients for Involvement: Program Examples

In 1986, the Tennessee Legislature appropriated $1 million to implement model parent involvement programs in distressed communities. Two years later case studies of four of the models were conducted by Donald Lueder and John Bertrand of the Center of Excellence: Basic Skills, Tennessee State University (1989).

The four models all were successful programs, which included some form of parent education. The distressed communities in which they operated were very different: an inner city metropolitan area, two very poor rural counties (one transitioning to manufacturing), and a community in the most poverty stricken region of the state.

The way these models succeeded illustrates most of the essential ingredients for parent involvement programs. Despite different contexts and program focuses, these four successful programs went through surprisingly similar steps in development and implementation:

1. A needs assessment was conducted and problems were defined.
2. Funding was obtained.
3. A coordinator was hired who reviewed the problems identified and immediately began to reach out to anyone who could help. Thus, the program developed from the bottom up, not the top down.
4. The coordinator began to implement the strategy named in the funding proposal, but was flexible and able to reevaluate problems and progress and find new strategies as needed.
5. The coordinator identified and used personal motivators/rewards to involve parents (door prizes, field trips, social services, etc.).
6. The coordinator built good interpersonal relationships with parents, school people and other community members, which led to developing a reputation of trustworthiness.
7. Project decision-making was a group process in which parents were given as much ownership as possible. Project practices were changed as needed, adapting to fit the population being served.

8. This led to a sense of empowerment among parents, which was passed on to their children.
9. The coordinator took any opportunity to expand the program and collaborate with other community programs (JTPA, for example).
10. All staff (coordinator, principal, teachers and aides) had positive attitudes towards people—they respected the parents of at-risk children, believed that they would respond to positive programs, and believed that they would become involved in their children's education.

The results in two short years have been impressive. In the inner-city program, for example, children's math and reading scores for each of the two years were significantly higher than those in two control groups.

Some of the innovative Parent Club activities included the following:

- putting on comedy versions of traditional fairy tales for the children;
- field trips—to the library, a cosmetology lab (for "makeovers"), nursing homes, museums, etc.;
- role plays of typical parent-child situations and group discussions about ways to resolve them
- preparing a Thanksgiving Brunch for parents and teachers (learning etiquette and how to host);
- making holiday gifts for teachers and children;
- learning to use materials for helping children at home with basic skills.

Parent participation far exceeded expectations: Of the 275 mainly African-American, single, unemployed parents, 80 attended the first meeting, and 205 attended at least one meeting during the year.

Section 2: Techniques for Effective Communication

Good communication rests on the ability of speakers and listeners to engage in an exchange of information, some verbal and some nonverbal. Communication skills for involving parents include

Activity	Skills
I. General Orientation	**1. Non-verbal attending** **2. Active listening**

II. Problem Identification	**3. Paraphrase**
	4. Restatement
	5. Open Questions
	6. Clear Directions
III. Problem Analysis	**7. Reflecting feelings**
	8. Self-disclosure
	9. Open Questions
IV. Implementation	**10. Giving feedback**
	11. Empathy
	12. Genuineness
V. Evaluation	**13. Giving feedback**
	14. Asking for feedback
VI. Generalize behaviors	**15. Goal setting**
	16. Giving feedback

David Johnson offers the guidelines below to all forms of effective communication.[7]

1. Clearly "own" your messages by using first person singular pronouns: "I," "my."
2. Make your messages complete and specific.
3. Make your verbal and nonverbal messages congruent.
4. Be redundant.
5. Ask for feedback concerning the way your messages are being received.
6. Make the message appropriate to the receiver's frame of reference.
7. Describe your feelings by name, action, or figure of speech.
8. Describe other people's behavior without evaluating or interpreting.

[7] For more information, consult this text: Johnson, D. W. 1986. Reaching out: Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualization. 3d ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

He similarly believes that speakers should be considered about their credibility. His suggestions to increase credibility:

1. The reliability of the sender as an information source—the sender's dependability, predictability, and consistency.
2. The intentions of the sender or the sender's motives. The sender should be open as to the effect she wants her message to have upon the receiver.
3. The expression of warmth and friendliness.
4. The majority opinion of other people concerning the trustworthiness of the sender. If all our friends tell us the sender is trustworthy, we tend to believe it.
5. The sender's relevant expertise on the topic under discussion.
6. The dynamism of the sender. A dynamic sender is seen as aggressive, emphatic, and forceful and tends to be viewed as more credible than a more passive sender.

Misunderstandings between people can occur because of faulty assumptions they make about communication. Two such faulty assumptions are (1) "you" always know what "I" mean and (2) "I" should always know what "you" mean. The premise seems to be that since people live or work together, they are or should be able to read each other's minds. Some people believe that since they are transparent to themselves, they are transparent to others as well. "Since I exist, you should understand me," they seem to be saying. Persons who make this assumption often presume that they communicate clearly if they simply say what they please. In fact, they often leave the persons listening to them confused and guessing about the message being communicated. Misunderstanding is common because clarity of communication does not happen.[8]

Here are some tips to help you to communicate orally with greater effectiveness.[9]

1. Avoid sexist language, regardless of whether your audience includes members of both sexes.
2. Use correct grammar. Never talk down to any audience.
3. Avoid slang and jargon. Clear, precise, simple language is better.
4. Avoid saying "er," "ah," and "umm."
5. Speak up. Vary your pitch, but always speak distinctly and enunciate carefully.

[8] Source material: Chartier, M. R. 1976. Clarity of expression in interpersonal communication. In The 1976 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, by J. W. Pfeiffer and J. E. Jones. University Associates, 1976.

[9] Adapted from: Goad, T. W. 1982. Delivering Effective Training. University Associates.

6. Monitor your pace as you speak. Avoid speaking too rapidly or too slowly.
7. Establish eye contact with your listeners so that they will listen and respond to what you are saying and so that you can see whether they are understanding you.
8. If you use gestures while you are speaking, make sure that they are appropriate to what you are saying.

Self-Assessments

The following form can be used to collect information on a person's use of basic communication techniques. As a personal assessment, you might want to audio-record yourself in a conversation then tally your use of each technique.

Communication Skills

skill	**tally**			
1. Listening Paraphrasing				
Clarifying				
2. Leading Leading				
Focus				
Question (open)				
3. Reflecting Reflecting Content				
Reflecting Feelings				
4. Summary				
5. Informing Advise				
Inform				
6. Other				

Examining Your Attitudes about Parent Involvement [10]

As a separate form of self-assessment, consider the following materials. These were created to allow school personnel to reflect on their assumptions, values, and biases relating to parent involvement. While there is no way to score your responses, the items will enable you to consider the limits to your openness to various forms of involvement.

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1986) suggest that parents and teachers will vary in their attitudes regarding involvement. Here are two sets of attitudes they cite. The statements below are paired. Place a "check" beside the one that most closely corresponds to your own attitude and beliefs. This is an optional assignment.

Set A	**Set B**
1. Home and school are separate, very different worlds. It is the school's responsibility to educate children, and the parent's responsibility to see that the children are dressed, fed, and prepared for school.	1. Schools share the responsibility for education with parents. The partnership with parents is flexible; on some issues the parents will be the more active partner; on others the school will be.
2. Educators are trained professionals whose job is to teach children; the expertise of most parents is in other areas.	2. Educators and parents have complementary expertise about educating children which should be mutually respected and used.
3. The most effective school organizational structure is one whose decisions are made by the principal and carried out by teachers and staff.	3. Educators should work as collaborative teams with each other and with parents. Where possible, decisions should be reached by a consensus.

[10] Henderson, Anne T., Carl L. Marburger, and Theodora Ooms. 1986. Beyond the bake sale. An educator's guide to working with parents. Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education. Reprinted by permission of the Center for Law and Education.

Set A (continued)	**Set B (continued)**
4. Parents should cooperate with school policies and procedures, and should be active in providing general program support. Their primary role is to reinforce the school's efforts at home.	4. Parents should be involved actively, both in helping their children and in supporting the school program as a whole. Parents should be offered a wide range of opportunities to be involved, at home and at school.
5. Parents have no place in educational decisions about school management, curriculum, or staffing. They delegate these tasks to educators.	5. Many educational decisions (even about curriculum and staffing) should be made with some input from parents.
6. When a child is having a learning problem in school, school personnel, including specialists, should investigate the nature of the child's problem. If it is serious, they should then inform the parents about their recommendations, and of any need for referral to outside specialists.	6. When a child is having a learning problem, the school should consult promptly with the parents in a joint effort to understand the nature of the difficulty and to plan strategies to resolve it.
7. The problems most children have in school are based on their own character and personality and/or the home environment.	7. The problems children have are the product of interaction between the child, the school setting, and the home; no one person or factor is usually "to blame."
8. Every effort should be made to resolve school-wide problems using existing structures within the school system. If the teacher and principal are unable to resolve a problem, they should turn to their administrative superiors in the district office.	8. When a school-wide problem arises the teachers and principal should try at the onset to involve every sector affected, including parents, students, administrators, and the community.

Set A (continued)	**Set B (continued)**
9. Involving parents or the local community in solving a school problem will undermine local support for the school and damage its reputation.	9. Many school-wide problems cannot be resolved without community support and cooperation.
10. Schools should not get involved in private family problems of divorce, teen pregnancy, maternal employment, or drug abuse. Nor should a school be expected to meet the problems of minority, foreign, or immigrant families. A school's function is to educate children, not babysit, counsel, or provide services for their families.	10. Recognizing that children's family problems can seriously impair their education, the school should assume some responsibility to respond to the special needs of working parents, divorced or separated parents, and minority or immigrant families.
11. The needs and convenience of the school system should have first priority in determining the school schedule, calendar, and special events. Parents should make every effort to attend conferences and meetings at the times scheduled.	11. In determining the school schedule, calendar and special events, the school should recognize the constraints on parents who are tied to rigid work schedules, long hours, and job sites far from home. It should consciously strive to find a balance among the needs of today's families, school personnel, and organizational efficiency.
12. Parents have a number of tasks to perform to carry out their basic legal responsibilities. When parents do not fulfill these, we have to assume they are uncooperative and/or apathetic about their child's education.	12.Parents have a number of tasks to perform to carry out their basic legal responsibilities, but when parents fail to perform them, the school should try to help parents do so.

Set A (continued)	Set B (continued)
13. It is the teacher's job to provide information about school curriculum and their child's progress to parents. Most parents have little to contribute in this area, as they are not educators or experts in child development.	13. Teachers should create channels for two-way communication with parents; they should encourage parents to raise questions, share their knowledge of their child, and express their expectations and concerns.
14. Most parents are comfortable with leaving their children's education to skilled professional educators and do not want to intrude in school affairs.	14. Most parents want to be actively involved in their children's activities. This interest should be welcomed and encouraged by the school.
15. Parents should be informed of any serious behavior problems their child has after school personnel have decided on a diagnosis and recommendations.	15. Parents should be consulted when the school first becomes concerned about their child's behavior, and should be actively involved in developing strategies to deal with the problem.
16. The school should not be expected to make special efforts to encourage parent attendance at special events, or to organize activities for parents unrelated to the school program.	16. When certain groups of parents do not participate in school events, the school should develop creative ways, with other parents' help, to overcome barriers to their participation.
17. Only a few parents want to be very active in providing volunteer assistance to the school program.	17. The school should offer a wide range of volunteer activities for parents which make best use of their varied skills, resources, and time, and should expect each family to contribute some time to the school.

Set A (continued)	Set B (continued)
18. Parents (or parent organizations) should provide basic information to other parents through newsletters, address lists, and educational meetings, but need not generally provide other supportive services to parents.	18. The parent organization should provide a newsletter, address list, and educational programs to help parents. In addition, it should be alert to the special needs of some groups of families, such as those headed by single parents, and develop programs to meet these needs.
19. It is rarely appropriate for parents to provide input into program or policy decisions, or to help schoolwide problems.	19. Parents should be offered a variety of ways to provide input into program and policy decisions and help resolved schoolwide problems.
20. It is accepted that parents have the right to express their dissatisfactions through regular administrative channels (first to the principal, then to the district or school board).	20. The principal should provide clear guidelines to parents about which decisions are open for negotiation and shared decision making, and which are not.

Self-Study Questions

- How do the themes covered in Lesson 1 relate to the themes in Lesson 2?
- Identify the ways in which the information on parent involvement relates to the discussion of communication strategies.

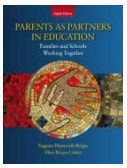
There is no assignment for this lesson. Please go on to Lesson 3.

LESSON 3 – ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Chapter 5



Lesson Overview

This lesson will provide an overview of the topic of assertiveness and will introduce the relevance of assertiveness to parent-teacher communication. It will link the readings in Berger and Riojas-Cortez with assertiveness materials provided in this lesson.

Discussion

Assertiveness is a philosophy of communication, a set of strategies for preparing for conversation, and a collection of techniques that will promote your success in relating to others. The following statements represent a summary of assertive communication. Consider each carefully.

The Basic Tenets of an Assertive Philosophy

1. By standing up for our rights we show we respect ourselves and achieve respect from other people.
2. By trying to govern our lives so as to never hurt anyone, we end up hurting ourselves and other people.
3. Sacrificing our rights usually results in destroying relationships or preventing ones from forming.
4. Not letting others know how we feel and what we think is a form of selfishness.
5. Sacrificing our rights usually results in training other people to mistreat us.
6. If we don't tell other people how their behavior negatively effect us, we are denying them an opportunity to change their behavior.
7. We can decide what's important for us; we do not have to suffer from the "tyranny of the should and should not."
8. When we do what we think is right for us, we feel better about ourselves and have more authentic and satisfying relationships with others.
9. We all have a natural right to courtesy and respect.
10. We all have a right to express ourselves as long as we don't violate the rights of others.
11. There is more to be gained from life by being free and able to stand up for ourselves and from honoring the same rights of other people.

12. When we are assertive everyone involved usually benefits.

Assertiveness: Rights and Responsibilites

Rights	Responsibilities
1. To have angry or illogical feelings.	1. To assess one's true feelings without exaggeration or under-estimation; to express feelings appropriately without demeaning someone else in the process.
2. To be treated as a capable person and not to be patronized.	2. To act in a responsible manner as much of the time as possible.
3. To have opinions accorded the same respect and consideration as others.	3. To think through opinions and realize that they are open to error and/or disagreement.
4. To make mistakes.	4. Not to repeat the same mistakes over and over; to learn from our mistakes; not to punish oneself or others because of mistakes.
5. To take the time we need to respond to requests.	5. To reply as soon as possible and not to take forever.
6. To make requests of others.	6. To accept others' answers respectfully; to carry out any commitments made.
7. To determine how to utilize one's time.	7. To respect this for others as well as self, to allow sufficient time to fulfill commitments.
8. To say "no" to requests.	8. To think through one's response before answering.
9. To choose personal values.	9. To respect this same right for others and not impose our values on them.
10. To have one's needs to be as important as those of others.	10. To express our needs and to work out a compromise if appropriate.
11. To change one's thinking and/or behavior.	11. To avoid "boxing in" oneself or others by labeling or judgments.
12. To strive for self-actualization through whatever ethical channels	12. To acknowledge and appreciate individual's choices and are natural for one's talents and interests, accomplishments; to enjoy the process.
13. To share authentic relationships.	13. To experience normal anger and joy and to assert these feelings with the people involved.
14. To have idiosyncrasies.	14. To recognize these and see that they do not interfere with others' rights and responsibilities.

A Comparison of Nonassertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behavior [11]

Item	Nonassertive Behavior	Assertive Behavior	Aggressive Behavior
Characteristics of the behavior	Emotionally dishonest, indirect, self-denying, inhibited	(Appropriately) emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing	(Inappropriately) emotionally honest, direct, self-enhancing, expressive
Your feelings when you engage in this behavior	Hurt, anxious at the time and possibly angry later	Confident, self-respecting at the time and later	Righteous, superior, deprecatory at the time and possibly guilty later
The other person's feelings about herself when you engage in this behavior	Guilty or superior	Valued, respected	Hurt, humiliated
The other person's feelings when you engage in this behavior	Irritation, pity, disgust	Generally respect	Angry, vengeful

[11] Jakubowski-Spector, P. 1973. An Introduction to Assertive Training Procedures for Women. Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Association. Modified from Alberti and Emmons, 1970.

Components of an Assertive Situation

A person may feel capable of being assertive in a situation but make a conscious decision not to be so, because of such things as power issues or the time or effort involved. Before making a decision to be assertive, it is helpful to examine the six components of an assertive situation.

1. The potential asserter's basic human rights and his/her level of confidence that s/he has these rights.
2. The specific behavior to which the potential asserter is responding.
3. The potential asserter's feeling reactions to this specific behavior.
4. The specific behavior the potential asserter would prefer.
5. The possible positive and negative consequences for the other person if s/he behaves as the potential asserter wishes.
6. The potential consequences of the assertive response for the potential asserter. Once the situational assertive components have been determined, assertion-training techniques provide a means of formulating and enacting an assertive response.

Assertive Body Language

1. Maintain direct eye contact.
2. Maintain an erect body posture.
3. Speak clearly, audibly, and firmly.
4. Don't whine or have an apologetic tone to your voice.
5. Make use of gestures and facial expression for emphasis.

Writing Your Script for Change

A script is a working plan for dealing assertively with a problem situation. There are six elements in a script:

1. **Look at your rights**, what you want, what you need, and your feelings about the situation. Let go of blame, the desire to hurt, and self pity. Define your goal and keep it in mind when you negotiate for change.
2. **Arrange a time and place** to discuss your problem that is convenient for you and for the other person. This step may be excluded when dealing with spontaneous situations in which you choose to be assertive, such as when a person cuts ahead of you in line.
3. **Define the problem** situation as specifically as possible.

4. **Describe your feelings** using "I messages." An "I message" expresses your feelings without evaluating or blaming others. Rather than say, "You are inconsiderate" or "Your hurt me," the I message would be "I feel hurt." I messages connect the feeling statement with specific behaviors of the other person. For example, "I feel hurt when you left without saying goodbye." Contrast the clarity of this message with the blame statement, "I feel hurt because your were inconsiderate."
5. **Express your request** in one or two easy-to-understand sentences. Be specific and firm!
6. **Reinforce** the possibility of getting what you want by stating the positive consequences should the other person cooperate with you. If necessary, state the negative consequences for failure to cooperate.

Successful scripts do the following:

1. When appropriate, establish a mutually agreeable time and place to assert your needs.
2. Describe behavior objectively, without judging or devaluing.
3. Describe clearly, using specific references to time, place, and frequency.
4. Express feelings calmly and directly.
5. Confine your feeling response to the specific problem behavior, not the whole person.
6. Avoid delivering put-downs disguised as honest feelings.
7. Ask for changes that are reasonably possible, and small enough not to incur a lot of resistance.
8. Ask for no more than one or two very specific changes at one time.
9. Make the reinforcements explicit, offering something that is really desirable to the other person.
10. Avoid punishments that are too big to be more than idle threats.
11. Keep your mind on your rights and goals when being assertive.

Basic Types of Assertive Messages

I-want statements

"I want you to do **this**" or "I would like you to do **this**" when referring to a specific behavior. Also: "I'd like you to do **this**," "Would you do **this**?" "How about doing **this**," or "I'd appreciate it if you'd do **this**."

Examples:

- I do want to know what I did that made you angry but I don't want you to call me names.
- I would like to think about your question and then get back to you.
- I would like you to come on time for our meetings.

Effects: The statements help you to clarify (for yourself and the other person) what you really want. It gives the other person information, not a non-negotiable demand.

I-Feel Statements

The statements take the form, "When you did that thing, I felt this way," "I liked it when you did that," or "I didn't like it when you did that." That thing is a behavior that the other person did, and this way is your specific feeling.

Examples:

- I liked it when you helped me put together the packages.
- When you raised your voice during the meeting, I felt attacked.

Effects: The statements help you express your feelings without attacking the self-esteem of the other person. The statements clarify your feelings and prevent you from being misunderstood.

Mixed-Feelings Statements

These statements take the form of naming more than one feeling and explaining where each originates.

Example:

- I've got some mixed feelings about what you just said. I'm thankful that you are willing to work with a raw beginner to develop lesson plans and that you pass on tips about how I could improve. Yet I don't like the way you told me. The extra comments about how naive and inexperienced I am—that's unnecessary, and I find it irritating.

Effects: When people have mixed feelings, sometimes they say nothing. When you communicate positive and negative feelings in response to the same situation, your ability to communicate is improved.

Empathic Assertion

Statements consist of two parts: first you recognize one or more of the following—person's situation (e.g., pressures, difficulties, lack of awareness), feelings (e.g., sad, glad, scared), wants (e.g., to discuss a topic), or beliefs (e.g., have been unfairly treated). Second, you describe your own situation, feelings, wants, and beliefs.

Examples:

- I know it's hard to say when you can give me a response, but I would like your best estimate.
- I know you would like to discuss your own feelings, but I would like to consider your child's situation first.

Effects: The statements are useful when you want to reduce the chances that the other person will be hurt or become defensive. People may be more likely to hear your assertive message given in this form.

Confrontive Assertion

Statement is appropriate when there are discrepancies between, for example, a person's words and deeds or a conflict between a job description and what you are asked to do.

The Confrontive Assertion has three parts:

1. Objectively describing what the other person said would be done
2. Describing what the other person actually did do
3. Expressing what you want.

Example:

- I thought we had agreed that you were going to be more considerate towards students. Yet I noticed today that when two students asked for some information, you told them that you had better things to do than baby-sit for kids. As we discussed earlier, I see showing more consideration as an important part of your job. What is making it hard for you to carry that out?

Effects: When discrepancies are confronted simply by describing them, it is much easier to deal with conflicts. Confrontive Assertion is a good follow-up assertion to use when the other person has previously agreed to change behavior.

I-language Assertion

The option is useful for expressing particularly difficult negative feelings. There are four parts to its use:

1. Objectively describe the other person's behavior or the situation that interferes with you.
2. Describe how the other person's behavior or the situation concretely affects your life, for example, in terms of additional time, money, or effort.
3. Describe your own feelings.
4. Describe what you want the other person to do, for example, provide an explanation, change behavior, apologize, offer suggestions for solving the problem, and give a reaction to what you have said.

Example:

- You may not be aware of this, but when you turn in your portion of our reports for me to type and you have written in light pencil, it takes me twice as long to complete them. I'd appreciate it if you would write your sections in dark pencil or a pen.

Effects: When you are able to specify concrete or tangible effects that another's behavior has upon you, your assertive statement is likely to be more effective in making a positive impact on others, since most people do not knowingly want to have their behavior result in tangible negative effects on others.

Helpful Hints on How to be More Assertive

1. Defend your rights when they are under attack; do not wait until it is too late.
2. Raise objections to specific infringements or denials of your rights; avoid over-generalizing.
3. Never apologize for defending your rights.
4. Be brief and to the point.
5. Deal with the present situation; avoid bringing up the past.
6. Avoid threats or aggressive behavior that may infringe on the other person's rights.
7. Remember, you may demand your rights; be sure you are demanding rights, not merely preferences or wants. (Note: When asserting your wants, you ask for whatever you want, but you do not have the right to demand it.)

8. Be assertive with your eyes, your facial expression, your gestures, your posture and especially with your voice.
9. Be friendly and firm initially.
10. If your rights continue to be infringed upon or denied, increase your intensity; e.g., increase your voice volume.
11. If your rights still continue to be infringed upon, feel free to seek assistance; e.g., legal counsel.
12. Remember, unless you have contracted otherwise, your rights are equal to those of the other person's; you each warrant equal consideration.
13. It may help to share your feeling reaction to the other person's infringement or denial of your rights.
14. Be aware of possible harmful consequences to yourself when asserting yourself with someone of greater power.
15. When defending your rights, it is important not to give up; remember; you have considerable control over how you are treated by others.

Troublesome Blocking Gambits

Laughing it off. Your assertion is responded to with a joke. (Only three weeks late? I've got to work on being less punctual!) Use the Content to Process Shift (Humor is getting us off the point.) and the Broken Record (Yes, but…)

Accusing Gambit. You are blamed for the problem. (You're always so late cooking dinner, I'm too tired to do the dishes afterward.) Use Clouding (That may be so, but you are still breaking your commitment.) or simply disagree (8:00 is not too late for the dishes.)

The Beat-up. Your assertion is responded to with a personal attack, such as, "Who are you to worry about being interrupted, you're the biggest loudmouth around here." The best strategies to use are Assertive Irony (Thank you) in conjunction with the Broken Record or Defusing (I can see you're angry right now, let's talk about it after the meeting.)

Delaying Gambit. Your assertion is met with, "Not now, I'm too tired" or "Another time, maybe." Use the Broken Record, or insist on setting a specific time when the problem can be discussed.

Why Gambit. Every assertive statement is blocked with a series of "why" questions, such as, "Why do you feel that way…I still don't know why you don't want to go…why did you change your mind?"

The best response is to use the Content-to-Process Shift. (Why isn't the point. The issue is that I'm not willing to go tonight.) or the Broken Record.

Self Pity Gambit. Your assertion is met with tears and the covert message that you are being sadistic. Try to keep going through your script using Assertive Agreement. (I know this is causing you pain, but I need to get this resolved.)

Quibbling. The other person wants to debate with you about the legitimacy of what you feel, or the magnitude of the problem, etc. Use the Content-to-Process Shift (We're quibbling now, and have gotten off the main concern.) with the assertion of your right to feel the way you do.

Threats. You are threatened with statements like, "If you keep harping at me like this, you're going to need another boyfriend." Use the Circuit Breaker (Perhaps) and Assertive Inquiry (What is it about my requests that bother you?) as well as Content-to-Process Shift (This seems to be a threat.) or Defusing.

Denial. You are told, "I didn't do that" or "You've really misinterpreted me." Assert what you have observed and experienced, and use Clouding. (It may seem that way to you, but I've observed…)

Techniques to Overcome Standard Blocking Gambits

Broken Record. Calmly repeating your point without getting sidetracked by irrelevant issues (Yes, but…Yes, I know, but my point is…I agree, but…Yes, but I was saying…Right, but I'm still not interested.)

Assertive Agreement. Responding to criticism by admitting an error when you have made a mistake, but separating that mistake from you as a bad person. (Yes, I did forget our lunch date. I'm usually more responsible.)

Assertive Inquiry. Prompting criticism in order to gather additional information for your side of the argument. (I understand you don't like the way I acted at the meeting last night. What is it about it that bothered you? What is it about me that you feel is pushy? What is it about my speaking out that bothers you?)

Content-to-Process Shift. Shifting the focus of the discussion from the topic to an analysis of what is going on between the two of you. (We're getting off the point now. We've been derailed into talking about old issues. You appear angry at me.)

Clouding. Appearing to give ground without actually doing so. Agree with the person's argument, but don't agree to change. (You may be right, I probably could be more generous. Perhaps I shouldn't be so confrontive, but…)

Defusing. Ignoring the content of someone's anger, and putting off further discussion until he has calmed down. (I can see that you're very upset and angry right now, let's discuss it later this afternoon.)

Circuit Breaker. Responding to provocative criticism with one word, or very clipped statements. (Yes…no…perhaps)

Assertive Irony. Responding to hostile criticism positively. (Answer You're a real loudmouth with Thank you.)

Assertive Delay. Putting off a response to a challenging statement until you are calm, and able to deal with it appropriately. (Yes…very interesting point…I'll have to reserve judgment on that…I don't want to talk about that right now.)

Direct Assertive Statements

Positive Feelings

I really like the way you did that.

You look attractive tonight.

I wanted you to know how much I enjoyed your speech.

You played very well tonight.

I love you.

Self-Initiation

I need your comfort and understanding right now.

Will you help me with my math?

I'd like to know you better.

Let's split the check.

I would like to talk to you about something that's been bothering me.

Limit Setting

I'd rather not answer that.

I was in line first.

I'd like to pay my own way.

I don't want to hear critical things about other people.

I would like to be alone tonight.

I don't doubt your concern, but I want to make my own decision.

That's not my responsibility. Please find someone else to take care of it.

Thanks, but I don't need any help.

I would appreciate your not smoking.

Negative Feelings

I resent your not being here on time.

I don't agree with you.

I want you to stop that. I don't like what you're doing.

I feel put down by comments like that.

I am disappointed that we had a change in plans.

I am not satisfied with the work done on my car.

I am unhappy that you told her what I said.

I am furious that you didn't call me.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #2

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **BEFORE** beginning the written assignment, **READ** Chapter 5 in the textbook and the above discussion
- **SELECT** one of the activities from the Chapter 5 list below.
- **SUBMIT** a typed summary of your findings or conclusions after completing the activity. This assignment is worth 60 points.

Chapter 5 Activity List (select one only)

a. Develop a list of suggestions in Chapter 5. Use it as a checklist to test a school's response to parents

b. Contact the president of a PTA or PTO in a neighborhood school. Examine the organization's goals and activities for parent involvement in the school. Consider the impact of the activities on teachers, administrators, and parents

c. Describe an ideal parent-teacher relationship. List five things a teacher can do to encourage an ideal relationship. List five ways the parent can insure a similar relationship.

d. List and discuss factors that can make a parent feel comfortable or uncomfortable (even intimidated) when visiting a school.

e. Visit a school. Examine and review bulletin boards, notices, and programs that attract parent involvement. Describe your impressions of the school staff's receptiveness to parent involvement

f. Design a want ad or letter that invites parents to become involved in the classroom/school. Describe a strategy by which parents could be recruited to work with teachers

Submit Written Assignment #2 electronically via the ICON Dropbox (**"Written Assignment #2"** folder).

- Complete and submit your assignment BEFORE moving on to the following lesson.
- Instructions on **how to upload your assignment** to the ICON Dropbox are provided on the course site (Content > Assignments).

LESSON 4 – USING NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **There is no reading assignment from text.** Read carefully the discussion in this lesson.

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides an overview of the topic of negotiation strategies during work with parents.

Discussion

The following materials define important elements to any discussion on negotiation. There is little material within the education literature to guide readers in their consideration of negotiation techniques. As might be expected, however, literature targeted at business and industry makes frequent reference to the topic. The discussion below reflects a small segment of the available literature. I encourage you to visit a local bookstore to search for additional materials on negotiation.

Negotiation is not just a technical problem-solving exercise but a political process in which the different parties must participate and craft an agreement together. Negotiation is more about asking than it is about telling. The simplest way to involve the other side is to ask for their ideas. How can negotiation be used to reconcile both sides' interests?

Thorn (1989) suggests that effective negotiators are made, not born. Existing skills in communication, listening, and empathy can be honed to fit the requirements of the negotiation strategies discussed below. Thorn identifies several basic recommendations for the behavior of a negotiator:

- Say as little as possible, and exchange information that is directly relevant to the matter under consideration.
- Be an attentive listener and avoid being overtly aggressive.
- Behave knowledgeably and confidently.
- Enter negotiation with ambitious goals.
- Be cautious in offering concessions until you understand the other party's understanding of the concessions.
- Know the limits of what you can offer and be clear about your authority and your ability to use it.

- Display respect for the other party and acknowledge their credibility, what they stand for and what they have to say. The ideal circumstance is one in which you and the other party already have nurtured a good relationship and your personal integrity is established.
- Display empathy for circumstances of the other party.
- Have the capacity for sustained concentration. Agility of mind is especially important in order to handle points of contention, as necessary, while still remaining committed to a strategy.
- Be able to think clearly under stress. Few people have extensive experience as negotiators, and can become overwhelmed with the seeming complexity of arrangements.

Summary of Negotiation Possibilities

School professionals have several choices as they approach encounters with parents. Thorn (1989), for example, outlines the broad possibilities for working with others:

1. **Battle.** We can submit immutable demands to parents, forcing them to choose between capitulation or debate/argument. Although there may be some issues on which we will elect to hold firm in an expectation or position, in general we seek to avoid battles with parents.
2. **Sale or Purchase.** In this option, the teacher can elect to provide a service to the student or parent at a price. While not an exchange of cash, the transaction might involve the parent promising to work with the teacher in some fashion if the terms of the purchase are acceptable. The teacher and parent can negotiate on how each will offer services, or the parent can refuse to cooperate. Give-and-take is a feature of many forms of parent-teacher collaboration. Within the sale or purchase option, one party initiates the transaction, in contrast to option #3, in which both parties enter as equals.
3. **Negotiation.** As specified in the following sections, the parent and teacher engage in a discussion of interests, options, and preferred outcomes that accommodates the needs and preferences of the two parties. Negotiation allows for an extended exchange of information, deliberation, and compromise.
4. **Charitable Offer.** The teacher or parent can make an unconditional offer of a service or product, expecting no return. Acceptance of that offer may condition an expectation of a future favor in return.

Writers on negotiation report on two common approaches to negotiation: win-lose, and win-win.

Win-Lose Negotiation

Competition with parties in conflict can produce win-lose negotiation. If you choose to engage in this form of negotiation, Thorn suggests that you

- Make quite clear your absolute commitment to what you must have.
- State what the consequences will be if you don't get it.
- Try to prevent your opponents from specifying their commitments. If they do,
- Provide some form of face-saving exit for them—perhaps by offering a mollifying concession which costs you little.

In a win-lose encounter, you can defend against the other parties' tactics by

- Taking up an equally strong position. Dig in early and present clear, but unemotional, opposition.
- Seeking an exchange of information to clarify each party's position.
- Establishing why each party holds its respective position.
- Stressing the consequences to the other party of a failure to resolve the issue (Thorn 1989).

Win-Win Negotiation

Collaboration between parties committed to non-combative sharing and mutual understanding can lead to cooperative negotiation (Thorn 1989). He suggests the following actions during win-win negotiations.

- Signal clearly that your intentions are for a win-win outcome (and seek confirmation of this from the other side).
- Identify problems, initially, rather than solutions.
- Establish an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. This may often best be achieved if you:
    - Tackle those problems with the greatest potential for a win-win outcome first, especially if they are difficult, so that a good head of steam can be generated towards resolving subsequent issues the same way.
    - Share information, in equal measures, step by step. Even if this sharing is not reciprocated initially, it should be continued, cautiously, for a short while.
    - Reward positive signals from the other side. Note that research shows that it is the regular frequency of concessions that is conducive to cooperative bargaining, not the size.

- Avoid a defensive posture. Be amenable as long as the climate is favorable.
- Avoid a 'legalistic' or contractual approach, if possible.

A Format for Negotiation

Ury (1993) suggests that there are five important elements to a mutually satisfactory agreement: interests, options for satisfying those interests, standards for resolving differences fairly, alternatives to negotiation, and proposals for agreement.

Interests. Parties in a negotiation must be able to rank order their interests and be able to recognize the interests of other parties to the negotiation. Ury places a high premium on the ability to "put yourself in the other side's shoes."

Options. Ury suggests that the purpose of uncovering the other party's interest is so that you can suggest options that satisfy the party and are acceptable to you. "Inventing options for mutual gain" is how Ury describes the mission of a creative negotiator. A potential mistake in negotiating for either party is to focus on a single solution, usually the original position for you or the parent. The effective negotiator will consider any option that will satisfy all parties.

Standards. Seeking a fair and mutually satisfactory solution will be the mission of both sides in a win-win negotiation. Defining what are fair or acceptable standards, and adhering to such standards for the remainder of discussions, will be the next priority. In parent-teacher negotiations, one standard might be that the outcome of discussions will be in the best interest of the child. What qualifies as being in the child's best interest can be a focal point for consideration.

Alternatives. The purpose of negotiation is to "explore whether you can satisfy your interests better through an agreement than you could by pursuing your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)." (Ury 1993) Using Ury's acronym, the BATNA is your fallback position, what you would do in the absence of a negotiated agreement. Clearly, the BATNA is a less preferred outcome to one that is negotiated, but will be satisfactory if discussions produce no compromise.

Proposals. Once acceptable standards and alternatives have been identified, both parties can zero in on an outcome that both would like to see realized. Together, the parties can develop a proposal that will produce agreement. Ury writes that "what distinguishes a proposal from a simple option is commitment: A proposal is a possible agreement on which you are ready to say yes."

Rehearse. A compromise or negotiated agreement between two parties can absorb large amounts of time and energy. Teachers will become more skillful over time as they become familiar with the requirements of effective negotiation. The parent, however, is often less familiar with the

parameters of win-win negotiation (though often very familiar with win-lose scenarios!). The teacher will be an important resource to the parent if s/he alerts that parent of the negotiation strategy being attempted. At times, the parent will need support to engage in the elements of negotiation, as well as to implement the options derived through discussion.

Thorn (1989) suggests that regardless of your intent during negotiations (win-lose or win-win), there are some tactics that can be implemented to further discussion. An important key to success is remaining open to information, and adhering to an assertive stance. Some of Thorn's recommendations include the following:

Avoid provocation. Stick to the issues that brought you to your meeting with the other party. Do not introduce information that you know will provoke a strong reaction.

Question. Clarify which areas are open for negotiation (see below)? What outcomes are the other party seeking? What is the basis and underlying assumptions for their case?

Solicit information on factors that could affect discussion. You may lack information on what truly bothers the parent or what would increase their willingness to work with you. The parent may consider certain aspects of their family life or their children's behavior as off-limits to discussion, but be very willing to consider a select range of actions.

Remain positive. Orient discussion to the future. Look towards how relationships can be improved.

Attend carefully to the parent's words and nonverbal behaviors. Remain alert for signals of willingness to compromise, emotional responses, and hesitancy.

Deadlock can occur at any of a number of stages during negotiation. Thorn (1989) suggests that you can manage the potential for deadlock using any of the following tactics:

Offer that both sides agree to avoid areas that create deadlock, and concentrate on areas in which progress can be made.

Shake up arrangements. Consider a change of emphasis, location, or contributors to discussions.

Propose a time out. A temporary delay can allow emotions to cool down and both parties to reconsider their positions. Then:

Restate and clarify both positions, in terms of areas of common understanding and commitment and matters that stand in the way of closure.

Issue a deadline. While you would do so with great caution, there might be occasions in which you must act by a certain time. Your statement of a deadline is, effectively, a warning that there are limits to your ability to negotiate. In stating a deadline, Thorn suggests that you "try to have some significant offer or proposal…which might break the deadlock, to offer in exchange for something of value to you."

Get them to clarify their intentions. How committed is the other party to reaching a compromise? What is their most important concern, and what is less important?

If helpful, remove the deadline.

Propose going to a third party that could act as a mediator during discussions.

Rules of Good Argument

Although Thorn (1989) offers the guidelines below for any negotiation procedure, the reader should recognize that your priorities and desired outcomes will influence the manner in which you adopt his suggestions:

Make only a few points at a time. The great temptation in making your case is to flood the other side with all the points in your favor that you can think of. Choose just one or two of your strongest, best-supported arguments and then shut up. Weaker points will only dilute your case. You can make the other points later, if you need to, as further reinforcement of your views.

Build up a case, logically and carefully, before drawing the inevitable conclusion that you disagree with the other side. Don't say you disagree first, and then explain why. This will only alert the other side and encourage them to fight you on each and every point you make. Rather, explain how you see the position, draw the inevitable conclusions that you feel must therefore be made, and then say you must disagree.

Listen carefully. It is difficult to listen when speaking. Don't interrupt. Furthermore, try to avoid point-scoring, clever or personal remarks, allocating blame, issuing wild threats and any other non-adult ploys. Such tactics rarely help to produce a positive outcome, and might also be remembered with a grudge next time you need to negotiate with your present opponent.

Seek clarification of the other side's position by neutral summaries and questions, e.g., 'I believe your key points are…' or 'So what you are saying is…, is that right?' or 'Does that mean…?' or 'What do you want us to understand when you say…?' It is a very powerful tactic to restate an opponent's case. This shows you have understood it, and forms a useful base for:

Demand justification of the opposing case, point by point (in a neutral manner, or else you will appear to be point-scoring) by asking "Why do you claim…?'' "What is your reason for…?" etc.

Check out priorities. What are the most important points for the other party—and which are the least important? This is necessary in any negotiation so that you can gauge both the cost to you of whatever concessions you may have to offer, and their value to the other side.

Be positive. This means being assertive about your case, certainly, but it also means refraining from out-of-hand dismissal of any points that might be made by your opponent before they have been fully developed. Being positive also means indicating your willingness to seek a realistic outcome.

Conducting Negotiations: Strategy and Tactics

Thorn (1989) and Ury (1993) represent only a small segment of the writers offering guidance to potential negotiators. Their proposals are representative of the vast majority of writers, who support an organized approach to planning for negotiations. Identifying a strategy and developing tactics that will be used to implement that strategy are central tasks for negotiators.

Ury notes that, at times, two parties may not agree on the rules for negotiation, in a sense must negotiate on how to negotiate. In such situations, he proposes the following:

> Negotiate about the process just as you would about the substance. Identity interests, generate options for how best to negotiate, and discuss standards of fair behavior. If, for example, your opponent refuses to talk about anything except positions, you might explain, "My interest is in achieving a mutually satisfactory agreement efficiently and amicably. As I see it, in order for us to accomplish this we have to be willing to listen to each other, share information about our interests, and brainstorm together. We ought to be able to expand the pie, not just divide it up. If I understand your interests better, I can help you meet them, and you can do the same for me. Shall we give it a try?

The goal is to change the game from positional (win-lose) bargaining to joint problem solving (win-win). Given the openness of the parties to this form of deliberation, Thorn (1989) suggests that the following questions are answered to the satisfaction of participants:

1. **Why** are we entering into a negotiation, and what will we be doing?
2. **Who** will participants in the negotiations? Will interested, third parties be present? What are the participants' styles and range of objectives?

3. **What** are our objectives? In what order of importance are they to be ranked?
4. **When** will arrangements suit us best and when not?
5. **How** should we express our initial demands? To what extent will we modify these demands when faced with counter-offers?
6. **What** elements in our position are we prepared to exchange as concessions in return for counter-offers? What are we not prepared to exchange?
7. **Where** do we want the negotiations to take place? Will we be willing to meet on our ground, theirs, or on neutral territory?
8. **How much time** will we need to commit to discussions?
9. **What** assumptions have we made about the other party and negotiation procedures? Can we check the validity of these assumptions?

Ury (1993) supports negotiations that reflect a commitment to joint problem solving. He recognizes that there are many barriers that affect realization of such a commitment, yet remains optimistic that a strategy based on collaboration can succeed. He suggests three broad objectives to joint problem solving: (1) people sitting down together to discuss their differences; (2) both parties recognizing and agreeing to face their differences; and (3) working to accomplish a mutually satisfactory agreement.

1. **Sitting side by side.** The thoughts (self-talk, beliefs, opinions, judgments) and emotions of both parties from potential barriers to productive collaboration. We must begin, of course, by recognizing our assumptions, biases, and emotions that affect our perceptions of the negotiation process and the other party. Under optimal conditions, both parties are public in expressing thoughts or emotional reactions that would influence the achievement of a satisfactory outcome. Given that we live in a world that does not always reward honesty, the next best response is to seek information on the perceptions and reactions of the other party and to offer similar information on ourselves.

   Ury suggests "going to the balcony" when we are engaged in discussions with others. His intention is that we must be able to distance ourselves from the details of the negotiations to check on both our and the other party's reactions. Empathy is skill needed here, and a willingness to "step to their side" and understand the reasoning or emotions that are influencing our collaborate in joint problem solving.

2. **Facing differences.** As negotiations proceed, you must remain aware of any shifts in the positions assumed by the other party. By definition, their position is the barrier that

motivated you to engage in negotiation, so as discussions proceed, modifications in language and tone may signal important changes. One way to clarify the intentions and the language of the other party is to use reframing.

Reframing involves redirecting the other side's attention away from positions and toward the task of identifying interests, inventing creative options, and discussing fair standards for selecting an option. The focus of the conversation shifts from positions to interests.

Reframing treats messages as subject to interpretation. A reframe can highlight the positive aspects of the other side's position. Because parties will be concentrating on the outcome of the negotiation, they may not be aware that you have influenced the process of discussion.

3. **Accomplishing a mutually satisfactory agreement.** With the best of intentions, either party may enter negotiations committed to joint problem solving. Unfortunately, in few encounters that qualify as negotiation do both parties have equal influence and power over potential outcomes. Generally, one party seeks a concession from another party, who in turn seeks compensation from that concession (a classic win-lose orientation). To shift negotiations to a genuine win-win outcome, the party with greater influence or power must use that influence or power to the advantage of all participants. Ury describes "building a golden bridge" and using "power to educate" as important activities that will guide participants towards joint problem solving.

Using Power to Educate

The harder you make it for others to say no, the harder you make it for them to say yes. "That is the power paradox," according to Ury. Overcoming the power paradox means making it easier for the other side to say yes at the same time that you make it harder for them to say no. Ury offers the recommendation that you use power to bring people to their senses, not to their knees. Your commitment must be to guide the other party towards recognition of and commitment to a win-win outcome. If the other side does not understand the consequences of failing to reach an agreement, you should be clear how serious these are.

In conclusion, Ury proposes working through barriers to cooperation. The key barriers are your reaction, their emotions, their position, their dissatisfaction, and their power. Ury recommends five steps to confront these barriers:

Step One. Since the first barrier is your reaction, the first step involves suspending that reaction. The first step in the breakthrough strategy is *to Go to the Balcony*. Break a cycle of conflict by not reacting. Suspend your reactions unilaterally.

Step Two. The next barrier for you to overcome is the other side's defensiveness, fear, suspicion, and hostility. You need to defuse negative emotions. You will need to Step to Their Side. If you want them to acknowledge your point, acknowledge theirs first. To get them to agree with you, begin by agreeing with them.

Step Three. You will want to tackle the problem together. The third step is to Reframe.

Step Four. The other side may be dissatisfied, unconvinced of the benefits of agreement. The fourth step is to Build Them a Golden Bridge. Make it easy for people to compromise. Instead of pushing the other side toward an agreement, you need to do the opposite. You need to draw them in the direction you want them to move. You need to reframe a retreat from their position as an advanced toward a better solution. You will start from where the other person is in order to guide him toward an eventual agreement. Work to actively involve them in devising a solution so that it becomes their idea, not just yours.

Step Five. The fifth step is to *Use Power to Educate.*

Tactical Choices

The suggestions available on effective negotiations are wide ranging. Listing below is a sampling of ideas from the authors cited above:

1. Identify unfair tactics used by the other party. Ury identifies stone walls (refusal to budge), attacks (pressure tactics to intimidate you to give in to the other side's demands), and tricks;
2. Recognize the tactic. Once recognized, you can begin to formulate a response;
3. Know your "hot buttons." Recognize not only what the other party is doing but also what you're feeling. Clues on how we are reacting often come from our bodies. Acknowledge your anger, frustration, or fear, even imagine attacking your opponent, but don't channel your feelings and impulses into action that will defeat your purposes;
4. Rather than force an action or a decision, buy time to think;
5. When necessary, pause and say nothing. Absorb available information before considering a response;

6. Paraphrase as needed to review the discussion. Ury's phrase for paraphrasing is "rewind the tape;" "Let me just make sure I understand what you're saying." Review the discussion up to that point. A paraphrase slows down the discussion, allows for corrections, and provides time to recognize the agenda of the other party. An easy way to slow down the negotiation is to take careful notes;
7. As needed, withdrawn from discussion for a break;
8. Practice active listening;
9. Be willing to acknowledge the points made by the other party. Acknowledge the other person's authority and competence. Acknowledgment does not mean that you agree with the other party. One of the most powerful and surprising ways to acknowledge the other side's point is to preempt it. (Ury 1993)
10. Acknowledge the feelings of the other party;
11. When appropriate, express an apology. Perhaps the most powerful form of acknowledgment is an apology. Even if the other side is primarily responsible for the mess you are in, consider apologizing for your share;
12. Project confidence throughout your exchanges;
13. In Ury's phrase, "accumulate yeses." "Yes" is a powerful tool for disarming the other side. Say yes as often as possible. You should try to receive as many yeses as you can;
14. Use language that is familiar to the other party. Avoid jargon and adapt your communication style to be more like theirs;
15. Monitor your communication so that you continually send signals of openness and cooperation. Ury and many other writers suggest avoiding the word "but" and relying on "yes…and." Your intention is to keep the other party willing to listen. How you ask something is just as important as what you ask;
16. In line with recommendations in earlier lessons, rely on "I" statements, not "you" statements;
17. Acknowledge differences with optimism. It is difficult to be hostile toward someone who hears you out and acknowledges what you say and how you feel. It is easier to listen to someone who has listened to you. Respect breeds respect;

18. Explore the other party's assumptions and reasoning. Treat the other side's position as an opportunity, not as an obstacle;
19. Encourage brainstorming. Raise "What If?" types of questions. To engage the other side in discussing options, you can introduce a host of possible solutions without challenging their position;
20. Seek the other party's advice. Ask "What would you suggest that I do?" "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" Or "What would you say to my principal?"
21. Act as if they must believe their position is fair—they usually do. Tell them: "You must have good reasons for thinking that's a fair solution. I'd like to hear them."
22. Use open-ended questions to gather information;
23. When attacked, deflect by ignoring, re-framing the person's actions or intentions, focus on issues yet to be resolved, and be willing to share responsibility;
24. Ask questions to check and clarify the other side's assertions. If you spot a contradiction, don't challenge it directly. Seek clarification: "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't understand. Could you explain how this relates to what you said before?"
25. Be willing to test the other party's commitment to compromise. Ury suggests designing a reasonable request that the other side would agree to if they were genuinely cooperative;
26. Be alert for unfair tactics. People who use such tactics are usually probing to see exactly what they can get away with. In order to get them to stop, you may need to let them know you know what they are doing. Don't accuse the other side. Just make note of what they are doing.
27. Recognize obstacles to agreement. What may appear reasonable to you may not appeal to the other party (e.g., it was not their idea, unmet interests remain, they fear losing face, too much is happening too fast);
28. Remain alert to where you are headed. Select ideas you find most constructive, and starting with them, head off in the direction you want to go. Show the other side how your proposal stems from or relates to one of their ideas. Invite criticism of your ideas. Constantly seek their feedback;
29. Don't' dismiss people or arguments as irrational. By dismissing others, we eliminate any possibility for joint problem solving;

30. Offer your support and guidance to the other party. A step-by-step approach has the merit of making the impossible gradually seem possible. Partial agreement can open up opportunities that were not evident earlier. Identifying expanding areas of agreement and shrinking areas of disagreement can generate a sense of momentum;
31. Ask reality-testing questions. Such questions are designed to force others to consider the consequences of not reaching agreement. Three common reality-testing questions are:
    - *"What do you think will happen if we don't agree?"*
    - *"What do you think I will do?"* Use questions to show them that you are not as vulnerable to threats as they may think and that your logical countermove would leave both sides worse off.
    - *"What will you do?" "What are you likely to do in the absence of agreement? How much will that cost you?"* (Ury 1993)
32. Offer direct statements of potential consequences, if the other side does not respond to reality-testing questions. Never threaten or confront, simply warn in an objective and respectful manner. Present your information in a neutral tone and let the other side decide. The more dire the warning, the more respect you need to show. Reminders on natural deadlines can serve as objective warnings;
33. If warnings are ignored, demonstrate your BATNA (see above). A temporary alternative is to walk out of negotiations. Another way to demonstrate your BATNA is to prepare to carry it out so that the other side discovers your plans in advance. If the other side continues to refuse to negotiate, you have no choice but to use your BATNA. How you use the power is therefore all-important. The more power you use, the more you need to defuse the other side's resistance, Ury believes;
34. Carefully monitor your use of power. Always use legitimate means. The more legitimate your use of power, the less likely the other side will resist it, and the more likely it will induce them to negotiate;
35. As necessary, involve third parties to stop attacks (the presence of a third party can deter your opponent from threatening or attacking you) or to promote negotiation. Ury's maxim is that "*For every ounce of power you use, you need to add an ounce of conciliation.*"

36. As the potential for agreement appears, back off and let them make their own decision. Don't just give the other side an either/or decision. Allow them to shape the details. It is your interest for your counterpart to feel as satisfied as possible at the conclusion of the negotiation.

Citations

Thorn, J. 1989. *How to negotiate better deals*. London: Mercury.

Ury, W. 1993. *Getting past no: Negotiating your way from confrontation to cooperation*. New York: Bantam.

Are you ready to take Exam 1?

From the list below, check the readings and written assignments you have already completed and/or submitted to your instructor.

☐ **Reading Assignments:** Berger and Riojas-Cortez

- Lesson 1 – Chapters 1 and 4
- Lesson 2 – Chapters 5 and 6
- Lesson 3 – Chapter 5
- Lesson 4 – no reading assignment from text

☐ **Written Assignments**

- Completed and submitted Written Assignments 1 and 2.

If you checked all the items listed above, **GO ahead and schedule your exam.** Additional information about your exam and the registration process is provided on the following page.

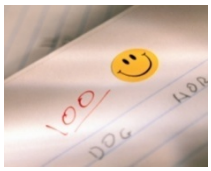
If you did NOT check one (or more) of the items listed above, complete the readings/assignments you are missing, THEN register for Exam 1.

EXAM 1

A supervised, **90 minute** examination follows Lesson 4. **Written Assignments 1 and 2 must be completed before the exam may be taken.**

Exam 1 will cover Lessons 1 through 4. The exam is closed book and closed notes; the use of a computer or other tool is not allowed. ***Good luck!***

Information regarding **exam registration**, scheduling, and policies is posted on the **course homepage** (ICON). **On campus students** taking exams at the Continuing Education Testing Center should register for their exam at least **two business days** before their intended examination day. **Off campus students** will take exams using an online proctored exam service.



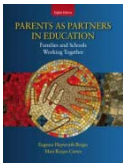
I will post your **exam grades** to ICON within one week after I receive the exam from the Division of Continuing Education. **Exams cannot be returned**, but if you are in the area and would like to inspect your graded exam, please e-mail me to make an appointment.

LESSON 5 – PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Chapter 6



Lesson Overview

This lesson provides an overview of the topic of parent-teacher conferences and will address skills that can enhance opportunities for success.

Discussion

The keys to success in a conference with parents are those of any successful encounter between adults. The elements of good communication have been outlined in Lesson 2. Applying those skills within the confines of the conference requires an awareness of both the demands of the conference agenda and the time with which one has to operate. A consideration of issues that affect parent-teacher conferences will precede a closer look at the conference format.

Conferences: Issues for Parents and Teachers

Jackson and Cooper (1989), in considering the ways that parents choose their children's schools and elect to participate in school functions, have discussed factors that influence parents' involvement with schools and the education of their children. The authors offer a three-part model to examine the means by which schools can influence parent decisions and involvement. The model is relevant to a discussion of parent conferences because conferences are a widely used format by schools and are potentially available to every parent. Why, then, do some parents attend conferences and other parents avoid such meetings? Jackson and Cooper propose that parent involvement is influenced by a combination of factors:

1. **Hierarchical participation.** Schools provide selected outlets for parent involvement, such as conferences, because such outlets have survived over the years as an expected element of school activities. Other long-established avenues for parental involvement are groups such as the PTA and PTO. Formal arrangements for conferences and parent groups are understood by parents and school personnel to be available to every parent.
2. **Individual decision-making.** Parents have the potential, in many communities, to select the school that they would like their children to attend. In larger population areas, choice between public, parochial, and various private schools may be available. The school's location, programs, and personnel may influence a parent's choice of school. Once a choice

of schools has been made, parents remain responsible for determining their level of involvement with current opportunities for parental input, as well as for deciding whether they will propose, develop, and implement new outlets. The activity level of parents reflects both their own willingness to become involved, and school personnel's openness and support of parent initiatives.

3. **Collective parent network.** The community around a school may represent a defined geographical area (in the case of the neighborhood school) or a broader territory (in the case of a magnet school or private school) that serves a specific clientele. The parents represented in the school reflect the diversity of their community and their commitment to school services. Parents view the school's efforts with interest; after all, the parents are entrusting the care and education of their children to school personnel. Parent perceptions of the success of the school in educating children relate directly to parental perception of a child's development. Most parents are satisfied, as noted in Lesson 1, with their local schools, even if they are suspicious of education outside of the community.

The school, thus, can encourage and support parent interest in schools by recruiting them to activities such as parent conferences. Jackson and Cooper believe that conferences, because of their wide availability and heavy use in many schools, are an obvious forum for educators to promote parent involvement. Yet the conference cannot stand alone as the primary vehicle for parent-teacher involvement. Teachers can use the conference to alert parents to forms of involvement, motivate them to contribute their time and energies in school programs, and help them locate resources that could address current family needs.

The issue of motivation is central to the parent's decision whether to participate in school functions such as conferences. Parent participation can vary by school, but generally decreases as the children grow older. One recent article by Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) argued that by high school age, parents are a neglected resource. Schools, the authors believe, have failed to maintain a high level of parental involvement, the result of which is that inequalities can emerge in the success of students.

The concept of "empowerment" can be linked to the consideration of parent motivation to become involved with teachers. Cochran (1987), in his review of the concept of empowerment, notes that the central concern in any relationship is one of power. Contacts between parents and schools are seldom on an equal footing, given the control that the school has over important functions of socialization and education. Cochran offers his own definition of empowerment:

> "An interactive process involving mutual respect and critical reflection through which both people and controlling institutions are changed in ways which provide those people with greater influence over individuals and institutions which are in some way impeding their efforts to achieve equal status in society, for themselves and those they care about." (p. 11)

While every parent can be encouraged to express personal needs and preferences for school programs, some parents may need assistance approaching and working with the agencies or services in the community. The conference can provide parents with a launching point for access to school and community services.

The Benefits of Parent Conferences

1. The opportunity to facilitate a partnership with the parent(s) (Lombana 1983). Recognition of mutual respect for the child and concern for continued successful development and academic progress can convince the parent that the teacher is a valuable ally.
2. The coordination of efforts that will benefit the child. The focus of efforts can be on any aspect of the school's or home's agenda for education and development. Parent-teacher collaboration has the potential of affecting more children than the offspring of a parent—as partners, the parent and teacher can discuss ideas that will benefit all children in the class. Teachers have even been known to change their perceptions and behaviors following successful collaboration with parents!
3. The enrichment of the teacher's understanding of the child, home, and community and the parent's understanding of the teacher, school, and educational mission. All parties can increase in awareness, compassion, and commitment to cooperation through their contacts.
4. The development of a solid foundation of communication, so that in times of crisis, trust and a history of collaboration is in place (Lombana 1983).
5. The "opportunity for clarifying issues, searching for answers, deciding on goals, determining mutual strategies, and forming a team in the education of the student." Berger (1987), p. 115.

Lombana (1983) takes note of potential **barriers** to effective conferences. The perceptions of participants can cause the most difficulty. Citing Seligman (1979), Lombana considers the personality of the parent and of the teacher, the problems being experienced by the child (or, as likely, the behaviors that concern the teacher or parent), the parent's reactions to and perceptions of the child's behavior, previous experiences of the parent with educators, and the teacher's skills in interpersonal relationships.

The teacher's emotions and perceptions are quite relevant to the progress of the conference, but may be ignored in an attempt at "objectivity." Teachers are best prepared for a conference if they first are aware of their thoughts, emotions, and priorities for the meeting, and do not attempt to mislead themselves or the parent as to their biases and preferences. Striving for objectivity or professionalism at the cost of dishonesty is likely to prove unethical (see Lesson 10 for an extended discussion on ethics).

The Structure of Parent-Teacher Conferences

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) have proposed a structure within which teachers can work with parents during conferences. The structure is offered to cover all circumstances, including group and individual encounters, whether the agenda is reporting, information gathering, or problem-solving. While Lawrence and Hunter make no claims for the application of their structure beyond parent-teacher meetings, their ideas reflect what the literature has established is essential to any successful conference. Their proposals will be considered within this section. In addition, sections to follow will consider necessary preparations for a conference, focusing on the development of expectations and objectives for the meeting, preparation for the verbal and nonverbal components of the encounter (including feedback and evaluation), and pursuit of an overall structure that will elicit cooperation and support.

What is a professional to do under circumstances in which little or nothing is known about the parents or broader family? The bulk of the literature has reported on activities in which professionals have been able to achieve a measure of control over their contacts with parents. The literature on conferences, for example, seldom considers the "real world" dilemmas of attendance, attention, and attribution of responsibility. How does the professional deal with no-shows, with parents whose personal needs interfere with the issues centering on the child that you would like to resolve, and what can the service provider say or do to cut through the defenses that a parent may display when the topic of the child's behavior is being discussed? These issues bring professionals face-to-face with the limits of our competencies.

Recognizing that all situations faced in working with parents cannot be considered in a short lesson, I will describe what the literature has agreed to be important factors in conferences, and what service providers might do to increase the likelihood of having a positive impact on the lives of the children they serve. A consistent theme throughout the lesson will be the importance of structure, both in setting up the boundaries within which you and the parent(s) will work and in the consistency with which you will approach your partner/parent.

The Issue of Comfort

Several writers address attention to the creature needs of adults during a conference. Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) encourage the use of a private and comfortable place for the meeting. Whether using the classroom or some other location, a teacher can post a note requesting privacy. Berger and Riojas-Cortez 's argument in favor of adult-size chairs for parents and teacher is supported avidly by the instructor, whose knees never recovered from a conference visit to his daughter's preschool. In addition, "the room should be well ventilated and neither too warm nor too cold." (p. 116) Control over the temperature of the room may be unrealistic in some schools, but the teacher can decide if an alternate space could be used in place of an uncomfortable meeting room. Lighting can be adjusted to meet the preferences of the parent and teacher. Given the stress inherent to any conference, the instructor encourages attention to both the teacher's and parent's physical comfort.

Burgess and Johnston (1987) are among the many writers touting the merits of home visits. The program described by these authors involved preschool-aged children. The home visit is seen as an important way to establish rapport with family members and to decrease the psychological distance between home and school. Home visits are popular in some districts, offering another indication to the parent that the teacher is committed to all facets of the child's development. Parents might be more comfortable in the home than in the school and more likely to openly communicate with the teacher.

Visits with parents have become more complicated with the increased incidence of two-parent working families and single-parent families. Visits to the home may alleviate the considerable difficulty a parent can experience trying to leave work to visit the school.

An option available occasionally is a visit to the parent's work site. Some employers are willing to permit meetings under special circumstances. The instructor remembers the difficulty he had arranging a conference with a parent who worked in a bar. Finally, the parent agreed that she could

meet if he was willing to come to the bar at 8:00 a.m. for the conference. The meeting went well and established an important basis for future sessions, this time at the school.

Teachers may be able to increase their chances of success in communication by attending to the parent's apparent comfort. Few adults can give full attention to a complicated task if conditions are perceived as uncomfortable. Recognition of the parent's comfort and a willingness to accommodate arrangements to suit the parent send a strong signal that we are ready and willing to attend to the parent's needs. Rapport might be established on a more cognitive basis, but seldom on a more effective one.

Exchanging Information During a Conference

Benjamin (1987) has provided a set of strategies that can be used to interview others. Every element of his proposal is based on good communication techniques. A service provider is expected, for example, to practice basic attending skills and offer a model of competence in communication that can only enhance exchanges with the help seeker. To review the elements of successful communication, refer to Lesson 2.

As the professional plans for an upcoming conference with a parent, Lawrence and Hunter suggest consideration of critical points in the flow of activities. Elements to address include:

1. Reasonable expectations
2. Establishing the conference objectives
3. Preparation for the conference
4. Opening statements
5. Formulating the message
6. Checking back
7. Closing the conference
8. Judging the success of the conference.

1. Reasonable Expectations

Looking forward to a conference, the professional can focus with ease on personal agendas for the meeting but will have a more difficult task predicting the thoughts and behaviors of the parent. As Martin (1983) has noted, the social psychology literature has confirmed repeatedly that humans have a great deal of difficulty understanding the perspectives adopted by other humans. Professionals, with training in their content specialty and in communication techniques, are often guilty of a similar inadequacy in grasping the priorities and preferences of help seekers (Schon 1983).

How can the professional address potentially divergent agendas? Hunter and Lawrence offer a few possibilities, including a simple request to parents to clarify their expectations for the conference, especially questions that they would like addressed or issues that they consider worth discussing. For both parties (professional and parent), expectations will be influenced by the amount of time available for the meeting, the skills of the professional in communicating with the partner and structuring the agenda, the receptivity of the parent to the message of the professional, and the complexity of the message.

The **amount of time available for the conference** might appear to be a minor consideration. Yet taken with other factors such as the complexity of the message, the professional can imagine that some meetings, especially those that require the parent to think through ideas or proposals offered by the co-participant, will result in greater demands for time. Demands on the schedules of both parties may result in a lengthy discussion, by telephone or exchange of notes, prior to actual agreement on a time for the face-to-face encounter. Agreement on a time for the conference does not occur independent of related concerns, such as the topics of discussion, the probable agenda of the professional, the potential location of the meeting (i.e., some sites may be more attractive to the parent and elicit immediate acceptance of terms for the meeting), and, what some have framed as a question, "what's in it for the parent?" The experienced professional will recognize that a parent can be bullied into compliance with proposals for a conference, but the likely outcomes from that conference can be predicted: little or no compliance. Thus, the decision to meet at a specific time and for a specific duration can be complicated.

Consider a further issue. The instructor was engaged a few years ago in conducting workshops on parent-teacher conferences. He had offered a university-based version of the course for more than five years prior to the workshop. In teaching students on campus, he had acquired a

sizable collection of anecdotes from participants, often parents and teachers. In one such session, a teacher had related a story about a prior employer (a large urban district) which held parent conferences on a special night. All parents were invited to the school. When they arrived, parents entered the gymnasium and lined up at the table behind which their child's teacher sat. Every ten minutes, a bell would ring and a parent would be able to talk to the teacher. Ten minutes later, the bell would ring again and another parent had a turn.

The reaction of students in the university class was one of shock. "How could the teacher communicate everything of importance in ten minutes?" "How could parents tolerate such an arrangement?" These and similar negative reactions were offered by the students in the on-campus class. [One quick note: the events in the story took place in an adjacent state; given human nature, the "horrible" events were easy to accept by the students, all of whom reported that they expected such things to occur in the other state and not their own.]

Back to the workshop. The workshop leader presented the story of the ten-minute conferences in the gymnasium and waited for the gasps. He waited, and not perceiving any reactions, asked for comments from the group, who all worked in one district. "Well," said one participant, "in our district we allow fifteen minutes before we ring the bell!" The instructor had stumbled across a district that followed a similar policy of holding parent conferences in the gymnasium! Since that workshop, he has been more cautious in offering his anecdotes, and as a result has discovered many schools that have operated on the "gymnasium model." Many teachers in such districts understand and accept the recommendations for structuring conferences found in this course, but report yearning for the control of parent input allowed by limiting contact to 10 or 15 minutes.

The skills of the professional in communicating with the parent and in structuring the agenda involve, in reality, a diversity of abilities by the professional, as well as influences that may be outside of the control of either party. It is critical to have expertise in establishing rapport as well as insuring that the parent is comfortable. One comment offered by some parents with extensive contacts with professionals (see NARC 1977) is that professionals seldom recognize the various discomforts that a parent might be experiencing. For example, a parent may enter a meeting expecting bad news. Whether or not the professional plans to offer what he or she might label "bad news," the service provider, by not exploring the readiness of the parent to work or even talk, can miss an opportunity to guarantee that the message being offered is being received and understood. A related situation, in which the parent is uncertain

as to just what is planned for the session or what is being discussed, can result in another failed opportunity for effective communication.

Another anecdote. Five years ago, a Midwestern agency, which serves as a resource for local schools by offering materials and consulting services targeted at the needs of handicapped students, did an informal follow-up of parents who participated in meetings to discuss the eligibility of a student for special education. More than 80 percent of the parents could not summarize, ten minutes after the meeting, the decision that had been made concerning their child, and did not realize that their child had received a label to designate the instructional arrangement being offered by local schools. As any professional who has sat in such meetings realizes, two "facts" can be offered about the nature of eligibility meetings: a collection of professional educators and support personnel are on hand (some times numbering 10 or more) and that these professionals are highly trained (often in communication).

The reader might argue that his or her local school district offers a more sensitive stance toward parental involvement in decision-making. Yet as Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1982) have argued, too often decisions are based on factors beyond what is offered as justification to parents, and too often parents are not provided with full understanding of the process and outcomes of consideration for service delivery. More will be discussed later on the topic of checking back and evaluating success of a conference.

The receptivity of the parent at the time of the conference is one aspect of establishing reasonable objectives that is difficult to examine with ease. A hostile or abusive parent may trigger a defensive reaction from the professional and result in termination of a session. Yet the passive or lethargic parent is as difficult to understand. The receptivity of the parent will be influenced by that person's reactions to us, to the problem or issue at hand, and to the position and power we hold, as well as the parent's thoughts and feelings for the child who is the focus of the conference.

The actions of the professional to clarify the parent's receptivity, even to assist the parent recognize the effect of receptivity on outcomes to be derived from the meeting, can succeed if the professional is able to establish, with sensitivity, consensus before proceeding. The elements of receptivity (including the parent's values and emotions) will be addressed in a later section.

Finally, **the complexity of the message or task** for the parent will influence the process of establishing objectives. A professional attempting to accomplish five loosely linked objectives

will have more difficulty communicating effectively compared to an agenda containing five closely related messages. If we expect a parent to be able to implement a specific plan of action in dealing with an identified problem, we must be sensitive to the parent's abilities to understand, as we do, the nature of the problem and the means by which we will address our solution.

2. Establishing the Conference Objectives

Discussion of what can be accomplished during a conference will lead to consideration of the objectives that can reasonably be accomplished during that meeting. The focus of the session will be influenced by the priorities of the participating parties and the success that the professional and parent experience in agreeing on how best to meet those priorities.

An optimal situation will be one in which both parties share a common commitment to addressing a topic under discussion. Yet a teacher may wish to discuss the merits of continuing participation of a child in a remedial tutoring program, while a parent may express a desire to evaluate alternatives to tutoring sessions that will allow the child to work independently on academics, with only minimal monitoring by the teacher. Ideally, the professional and the parent will be able to express clear preferences for use of conference time. When both parties can satisfy preferences for the use of conference time, the likelihood of a successful outcome to the conference is heightened.

When preferences cannot be addressed within a single meeting, negotiation of an alternative plan of action can begin. The professional and parent may have conflicting perspectives on a single issue or may identify different issues as priorities.

In the case of the participants clashing on an issue, the professional can attempt, first, to clarify the nature of the difference. In one district, a school psychologist collaborated with a teacher in working with a family, with the goal of encouraging alternatives to corporal punishment. The family had participated in therapy, and the mother had enrolled in a parent education program. Meetings with the parents had focused on issues such as the likely outcome of adopting a new approach to discipline. At one point in the biweekly meetings, the father had stated he would not give up his use of corporal punishment and was unwilling to discuss democratic alternatives further. The teacher was faced with a decision as to how she could attract the parents to additional school conferences while reinforcing ongoing involvement of the family in therapy.

A seemingly easier area to resolve will be situations in which priorities differ among participants. The professional, for example, might identify as important the discussion of a parent's expression of support for the child's progress, while the parent could prefer to focus on the child's reactions to a program offered by the school. Unless there is a compelling reason to adhere to a particular agenda, the professional can present the parent with options that allow both parties to meet expressed needs.

Consider the case of a classroom teacher who has asked a parent to discuss the progress of the parent's youngest child, a second grader. The teacher already has met with the principal to voice unease with the child's success in relating to peers and adults. The child is characterized by the teacher as extremely shy. The principal has recommended that the teacher meet with the parent to discuss the child's behavior before any attempt is made to assess the child's social skills.

When the mother was contacted, she attempted to deflect the teacher's concern by discussing the school's emphasis on reading. The parent was concerned that the child was being exposed to instruction well beyond her ability to comprehend.

The teacher re-emphasized the original concern relating to the child's classroom interactions, but offered to schedule a meeting in which the parent, teacher, and the principal could sit down to discuss the child's work in reading and the district's emphasis on instruction. The parent agreed to meeting twice, and eventually informed the teacher of a similar concern about the child's social skills.

Any professional will be tempted to emphasize his or her own priorities for discussion. Yet as the literature on treatment acceptability (see, for example, Reimers, Wacker, and Koeppl 1987) and treatment compliance (see, for example, Meichenbaum and Turk 1987) reveal, the likelihood that any service priority is achieved rests upon a consensual acceptance of the issues being addressed and any plan adopted to deal with shared concerns.

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) suggest that much of the negotiation regarding conference objectives can follow telephone or mail contacts requesting the parent's priorities for an agenda. Whether such a strategy can result in consensus on an agenda will be affected by the level of trust the parties have in each other (i.e., how honest they are with each other) and the complexity of the issues tendered as priorities by the parties. A complicated issue that the professional would prefer to discuss may not be described easily in a brief note or telephone message. At times, the professional may be concerned that identifying a topic of discussion in

advance could offend or scare off the parent, even affecting the parent's receptivity to any meeting. The professional's preference for any topic will be influenced by ethical choices, strategic considerations, and practical issues, such as the likelihood that a parent will become involved with the teacher to discuss a specific issue.

3. Preparation for the Conference

The nature of the conference format will shape the considerations faced by the professional in preparation for the session. Formats that will be addressed in the next several segments of the chapter include group (orientation) conferences, reporting conferences, information gathering conferences, and problem-solving conferences.

Preparation for any conference will require the professional to plan for contingencies that may not arise, yet few readers would prefer to enter a conference without such planning. Elaboration on the preparation associated with the four conference options will begin later in this lesson.

Parents prepare as well for the conference. Parent concerns can be presented as questions to the teacher. Berger (1987) offers a list of questions (see Box 5.1) that parents might ask. Teachers, in their initial contacts with parents about a conference, can broach the possibility of bringing questions to the meeting. If possible, the teacher could suggest that s/he be alerted to questions the parent considers important, so that answers can be sought prior to the meeting.

Shea and Bauer (1985) propose that a handout be distributed to parents in advance of the conference. The handout could be used by the parents to plan for the meeting, gather information that might be useful to the teacher, and identify what tactics might be employed during the conference to address interests and concerns. See Box 5.2 for Shea and Bauer's suggested handout.

Box 5.1

Questions a Parent Might Come Prepared to Answer

1. Which activities does the student talk about at home?
2. Which activities seem to stimulate intellectual growth?
3. What does the student enjoy?
4. What does the student dread?
5. What are your child's interests and hobbies?

Questions that Parents Might Want to Ask

1. How does my child react to discipline?
2. How does my child respond to expectations from learning?
3. What can I do to help my child do well at school?

From: Berger, E. H. 1987. Parents as partners in education. The school and home working together. 2d ed. Columbus: Merrill, 121–122.

Box 5.2 Parent Handout for Conference Preparation

Before the Conference

1. Make arrangements for your other children, if necessary.
2. Jot down any questions you may have for the teacher, such as
    - Is my child working to the best of his/her ability?
    - How is s/he progressing in skill areas?
    - Does s/he get along with teacher and children?
    - Does s/he follow classroom rules?
    - What is his/her attitude in the class?
    - How does the staff handle specific behaviors?
3. Talk to your child about the conference. Ask if s/he wants you to ask any questions or raise any issues.
4. Collect any records or information that may help the teacher. Try to anticipate questions and prepare answers.

At the Conference

1. Please be on time and schedule another meeting if allotted time expires.
2. Discuss the child at issue. Reserve other topics for other meetings.
3. Ask any questions about your child's progress.
4. Volunteer information that may help the teacher plan activities.
5. Feel free to takes notes to review later.

After the Conference

Feel free to contact your child's teacher for further clarification.

From: Shea, T. M. and A. M. Bauer. 1985. Parents and teachers of exceptional students. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p. 146. Reprinted by permission.

4. Opening Statements

The initial seconds of a conference are important in establishing the tone for the session. Consideration of the setting in which the conference occurs is part of advance planning. If a session is scheduled in a school building, what area of the school or classroom allows for appropriate levels of privacy and comfort? If the session is held outside of the school, do the teacher and parent prefer a home visit or conference in an independent setting, such as a restaurant? In part, personal preferences, district policies and practices, and availability of alternatives will influence a decision on the setting.

Regardless of the setting, the professional will work to convey a tone during the encounter that emphasizes the importance of the work to be accomplished while placing a premium on the participants' emotional and physical comfort. Writers such as Fritz Steele (1973) have emphasized the importance of environmental factors in motivating workers to produce at optimal levels of performance. The same principle applies to the work accomplished by teachers who can attempt to confirm the parent's readiness to work and any initial preferences relating to the logistics of the meeting (e.g., refreshments, need for rest rooms, lighting, seating, and so on).The emotional consequences of the conference agenda may be mitigated by the behaviors participants use to ease tensions. A parent, for example, who feels confined in a conference room or overwhelmed by the number of staff members may focus attention, in part, on feelings associated with these perceptions and possibly miss important elements of the professional's message.

Some parents will be much more comfortable if able to smoke during a conference. While recognizing that many school professionals do not advocate smoking, the reality remains that some parents (and professionals) prefer to listen and participate in conferences if allowed to smoke. A universal policy to follow regarding smoking is not easy to establish. Educators may prefer to promote alternatives to smoking or operate in a district that does not permit smoking on school property. Some professionals may have strong aversions to smoking. Whether to smoke during a conference may become another item for the professional to address in setting up the meeting, and may influence the setting in which the meeting is held.

Other issues faced during the initial moments include the means by which participants greet each other and proceed in the discussion. In maintaining the emphasis on establishing the tone for the session, initial greetings will be brief, honest in their warmth directed at the parent's attendance, and focused on the task at hand. Focusing full attention on the parent will reinforce the impression that the task that has brought the conference participants together has your full interest and attention.

A member of the audience during a presentation by the instructor offered an example of a situation in which she, as a parent, did not experience an impression of the importance of a conference. The parent had been scheduled for a reporting conference in which her child's progress was to be discussed. The teacher looked up when the parent entered the room, directed her to a chair, then proceeded to begin talking, *but never stopped grading papers that she had on her desk!* The parent, as might be expected, was offended by the teacher's behavior, and later asked other parents if they had experienced the same behavior. They had. Needless to say, that teacher's reputation for openness and caring with parents was affected as a result of the events that evening.

When the parent has initiated a conference, your attention will facilitate establishing rapport and the impression that you are open to whatever the parent will say. The parent may have alerted you to the concern to be presented, allowing you the opportunity to reflect on how to proceed. Even without the opportunity for reflection, your ability to model openness and concern will be important in resolving the problem at hand. Your success in offering a positive model of communication will be critical in circumstances containing verbal hostility and abuse.

5. Formulating the Message

Proceeding beyond the initial moments of the conference is of obvious importance, as the true work of the session can involve lengthy discussion. The means by which communication can be

clear to parents will involve the basic communication skills already discussed. Beyond these skills, the practitioner would do well to insure that the full extent of the information discussed remains understandable to the parent. In other words, the parent should be able to grasp the essence of what is being discussed, even able to paraphrase statements or points that have been made.

Many writers have emphasized the importance of avoiding jargon during conferences. Yet some technical words or phrases must be used if the professional is to communicate specific information. Medical personnel cannot avoid using terms that are used for diagnostic purposes or are necessary in noting treatment options. The same emphasis on terminology will be common to any discipline. Use of such jargon does not preclude, and indeed probably necessitates, an attempt to define and elaborate on the broader meaning of a technical word. As important as establishing the technical meaning of jargon will be the related activity of establishing what the jargon does not mean or imply.

The professional is well advised to offer information within a context or explanatory system that clarifies how a behavior has come to be viewed as a problem. Schon's (1983) use of the term problem setting is relevant on this point. The variables that the professional considers critical in defining a behavior or event as a problem will reflect that individual's training and experience. A social worker, for example, will look for means by which families satisfy their needs, and may ignore, in many cases, concerns of greater interest to an educator (e.g., the process by which children acquire certain academic knowledge).

Schon has argued that our professional perspective can limit our understanding of some aspects of a situation that we consider problematic. We can ignore potentially important elements in a situation that attracts our attention. One alternative for the professional is to make public his or her criteria for describing and evaluating behavior. The teacher and parent then can discuss how the professional views a situation. As Schon (1983) writes, the professional can model openness of communication.

During conferences, the professional can offer detailed examples of behaviors that have been observed. Behaviors can range from a child's conduct in a particular setting, to products of that child's participation in various activities, to actions that have been observed that relate to concerns being discussed. For example, a teacher can provide a parent with examples of the child's work, each item of which is dated. The parent can discuss evidence on progress (or lack of progress) with the teacher and recognize the need for further action.

Many writers (see, for example, Heward, Dardig, and Rossett 1979), champion a general policy of avoiding labels for a child's behavior, in favor of offering descriptive information. Labels such as "hyperactive," "disruptive," and "shy" may impede accurate understanding by the parent of the specific behaviors of most concern to the professional. A problem related to some labels is that they may trigger reactions from the parent that interfere with meeting conference objectives. A parent being informed that her child is shy, may respond that she was shy at the same age and grew out of it. The professional may face a difficult task of focusing the parent on the needs of the child, let alone motivating the parent to consider an intervention.

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) describe enabling phrases that assist professionals to formulate messages. In addition to remarks that invite the parents to provide specific information, comments that reinforce parental involvement and contributions to the conference, as well as remarks that recognize the challenges faced by the parent in childrearing, the professional can emphasize time-referenced statements and comments that maintain focus during the session.

The goal of time-reference statements is to signal clearly the frequency, progression, and time frame of events. If we state, for example, that behavior "X" occurred twice on day one, six times on day two, and three times on day three, the parent will be able to grasp the extent of the behavior that we report. When we reveal how behaviors are related and the time frame over which they occur, we are seeking parental recognition of what we are describing and acceptance that the behaviors are occurring as described. We need not label a behavior, such as lack of interaction with peers, as a problem if the parent accepts our evidence that the child did not initiate peer interaction more than once a week over a period of a month. With emphasis on the importance of peer interaction to foster the development of appropriate social skills, we can begin to consider with the parent alternative means of furthering the child's skills and abilities.

Comments that maintain focus during the conference are of obvious importance to meeting the objectives of participants. Readers may have encountered at least one parent who derailed discussion during a conference by bringing up issues unrelated to the focus of the conference. The professional who chooses to deal with such remarks has several options: reminding the parent of the conference agenda as agreed earlier, accepting part of the responsibility for getting off track then offering to return to the agenda, or scheduling another meeting. The service provider who operates on a very tight schedule can be especially frustrated by diversions to the discussion. No easy answer is available in response to some parents, who prefer to proceed at their own pace.

6. Checking Back

At several points during the conference, the professional can ask the parent for questions and comments, or request that the parent re-state the key points of the discussion. Some parents will be skilled in providing a paraphrase of key points, while others will require the professional to provide a summary and the parent to validate that statement.

Asking for questions or comments at the end of the conference may be greeted with a smile but no remarks. Many school professionals become aware after conferences that parents had concerns or questions, but did not state them. The professional must recognize the barriers that many parents perceive in service settings when confronted by agents of the school. Some parents would not question a professional under any circumstance, while others will voice concerns if allowed sufficient time. The professional can open doors to communication by implementing the skills described in Lesson 2. Over time, all of us develop a repertoire of tactics we use to establish rapport and to seek feedback. We must remain open, however, to the possibility that our repertoire does not affect the willingness of a parent to raise questions or offer comments.

7. Closing the Conference

The conference that has proceeded toward established objectives will focus as well on the need for future encounters. Many of the topics discussed during the conference can lead to future meetings, whether over the telephone, via the mail, or in subsequent conferences. The professional may seek to monitor compliance of the parent with plans negotiated during the conference, or share responsibility for implementing and evaluating an intervention. Under all conditions, the professional will work to confirm the key points of discussion or agreement during the meeting, and establish procedures for contacts in the future.

As noted above, many elements of effective communication can be packed into the brief period of time spent with the parent. Attention to building rapport and reaching agreements that reflect true cooperation may prove important to fostering the parent's optimism and adherence to agreements. Little can be expected as an outcome to a conference if the parent leaves the meeting with no intention of collaborating on a plan or intervention.

8. Judging the Success of the Conference

The importance of evaluating the outcomes of a conference cannot be understated. The professional can gather important information about the parent's perceptions of the

professional's behavior. Documentation of outcomes to planned interventions is possible, and can offer a picture of success (or lack thereof) that is understood by all parties. Data to be gathered and the conditions under which behavior will be observed can be established in advance (see Kratochwill and Bergan 1990, and Bergan and Kratochwill 1990).).

A review by the teacher of the planning, process, and outcomes of the conference can provide understanding of the elements of the meeting's success or failure. Reflection on the teacher's actions and verbal presentation can improve planning for future conference. See Berger’s (1987) ideas for a conference checklist (Box 5.3).

Box 5.3 Conference Checklist

1. Prepare ahead by collecting anecdotal records, papers, notes, worksheets, and art materials from the beginning to the end of the reporting period?
2. Provide book exhibits, displays, or interesting reading for parents as they wait for their conferences?
3. Make arrangements for coffee or tea for parents as they wait for their conferences?
4. Prepare your room with an attractive display of children's work?
5. Welcome the parents with a friendly greeting?
6. Start on a positive note?
7. Adjust your conference to the parents' needs and level of understanding?
8. Have clear objectives for the conference?
9. Say in descriptive terms what you mean? Did you avoid educational jargon and the use of initials or acronyms?
10. Listen reflectively?
11. Keep the communication lines open? Were you objective and honest?
12. Avoid comparing students or parents? Discuss other staff members only if comments were complimentary?
13. Check your body language? Were you alert to the parents' body language?
14. Plan the child's educational program together?
15. Summarize your decisions?
16. Begin and end on time? If you needed more time, did you set up another appointment?

Writers on school conferences consider subsequent contacts by parents as a sign that the professional has been successful (Berger, 1987). Without ignoring the importance of personal assessments of success or failure, the instructor proposes that practitioners maintain documentation of the process and products of conferences, not only to provide a means of establishing what occurred, but providing an opportunity to engage in self-assessment, as described by Schon (1983). Over time, we can become, as professional service providers, relatively unaware of our impact on others and the extent to which our actions influence expected outcomes. Martin (1983) has identified the factors that all professionals face when considering problems and alternatives for action. One means by which we can work to maintain objectivity and effectiveness is to consult with a colleague on a regular basis, using each encounter as an opportunity for

emotional and technical challenge. Professional renewal consists, in large measure, of a commitment to examine our choices and their underlying values and assumptions (see, for example, Argyris 1982, 1985.).

Factors in a Successful Conference

The communication skills that contribute to successful conferences are familiar by now, but other issues face the professional working to guarantee that specific outcomes to a meeting are achieved. Outcomes could include insuring that the parent is cognizant of specific facts, is motivated to work collaboratively with the professional, or is comfortable stating concerns or preferences about a topic of interest. In this section, we will explore the influence on conference outcomes of the following:

1. Values of the participant
2. Emotions of the parent
3. Problem ownership
4. Type of conference
5. Group
6. Reporting
7. Information gathering
8. Problem-solving

1. Values of the Participants

Whatever the issues facing the participants in a conference, the professional must recognize that personal values and assumptions affect all parties' perceptions of the problem at hand. By not recognizing one's own values and assumptions, the professional will offer services while claiming complete objectivity and promoting actions in what the professional considers to be the best interest of the client (parent or child). The parent's values and assumptions, as well, must be considered as crucial information to the professional. By understanding important features of the parent's perceptions of the problem situation, the professional is better prepared to offer assistance, deal with conflicts of values, and, in general, proceed in a manner that invites collaboration and openness.

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) consider four aspects of values that must be recognized by the professional:

- Values are learned
- Values are ranked in importance
- Values of similar rank may compete with each other
- Values can be modified and changed.

Values are learned. All of us bring values into our encounters, both personal and professional. These values are generally of long standing, and may reflect lessons that were taught to us during our childhood. Martin (1983) notes that because of the manner in which we acquire our values, we do not have ready (or even possess any) access to the cognitive justifications or rationales that were involved in the establishment of each value. We simply believe in our values, and (with important exceptions) argue that our actions are outgrowths of these same values. Argyris (1987) has reported on his extended efforts to help people realize that they seldom are behaving in a manner that is completely coherent with core values.

What can we do other than recognize that we are human? The answer is not simple nor likely to result from any one action at a single point in time. Recognition of values that remain constant in our awareness is a beginning. Schon (1983) has urged us to reflect on our thoughts and behaviors, never allowing ourselves to work on "automatic pilot" or in a fashion that could be labeled stereotypic. We must recognize that the issues that have led to our considering a specific behavior to be a problem may not be perceived as such by the parent.

Our communications to a parent will reflect our values and, thus, our biases in the situation. For example, as a professional teacher, you may see certain behaviors of the child as interfering with progress in academics. Consider a third grade classroom in which you want to insure that children progress through curriculum in reading, arithmetic, and social studies so that the next year's curriculum can be mastered. A parent who believes that the three R's are important, but not as much as the child being happy and fitting into the peer group, may not identify slow progress in reading as an emergency requiring a special intervention. After all, plenty of time remains for the child to acquire such skills, the argument may go, or the parent experienced similar problems at the same age and still mastered necessary skills at a later grade. Whatever the source of conflict in values, the professional is ill served if s/he ignores the parent's perspective on the child's school progress.

In addition, we present children with a dilemma when we seek to impose values (or actions that reflect such values) that contradict what the child has learned, at home, to be important. As representatives of society's institutions, we embody one version of consensus on values. Whether we believe that all members of a society should strive to be consistent with consensual values or believe that diversity of values must be tolerated, the impact of our values on our actions must be part of our awareness as we enter into a conference with parents.

Values are ranked in importance. Part of our awareness must include recognition that both our values and those of parents' are extensive and diverse. We believe many "truths" and hold many values dear. When certain values are deeply felt or of immediate relevance in a situation, we can be sure that our actions and words will alert others to our beliefs. The same holds true, of course, for parents. A deep belief in the importance of a child's compliance with parental wishes and a strong preference for corporal punishment can coincide with the use of spanking or beating when a child misbehaves at home. As professionals working in public and private institutions, we hold beliefs that often conflict with the use of corporal punishment. We may hold our beliefs strongly, but both we and the parents hold other values in common (e.g., the importance of education) that assists us in the process of establishing rapport and a common commitment to resolving a problem.

Values of similar rank may compete with each other. At times, we or the parent will hold beliefs of equal value or weight. We might, for example, want a child to be a more frequent initiator of contact with peers without the child becoming too aggressive or assertive. The term, "assertive," hints at the fine line that can exist in our thoughts, especially preferences, for the child's behavior. As adults, we recognize the philosophy that underlies the use of assertiveness skills, yet in teaching a child to communicate assertively, the lesson learned may emphasize the skills and not the rationale of what we are teaching.

A parent may experience a similar conflict, wanting two (or more) potentially conflicting outcomes for the child. We can assist the parent to consider alternative perspectives when we are presented with an instance of such a conflict, re-framing the preferred actions in light of the values that the parent considers important.

Values can be modified and changed. The literature on values holds some promise that values can be acquired or modified later in one's life. All of us are exposed to circumstances that confirm or contradict our expectations and values. If we choose to attend to some of the lessons we encounter through life, we may seek to alter current values in favor of others that seem

more consistent with our experiences. Each reader is aware of the difficulty of changing values. An example often in the news involves cigarette smoking. Most of us value life and recognize the potential hazards of smoking, yet millions continue the practice (and millions try to stop smoking each year). We have plenty of evidence that people do succeed in stopping smoking, in the process affirming certain values (e.g., the importance of good health) while disconfirming others (e.g., the importance of oral gratification).

Professionals recognize that the only values being considered for change need not be the parent's! Increased sensitivity to the beliefs and emotions of consumers can result in our adopting what we believe to be their perspectives or preferences for behavior. For example, a school counselor may enter the profession with a strong belief in the value of self-determination, yet be confronted with a case load of children in need of structure, or at least structured choices. The professional may come to believe in the importance of informed choice when dealing with children and other adults.

Of relevance to this discussion is the impact of value differences between professional and parent and the avenues available to address such differences. A basic question might be "Why address value differences when in the process planning to help the child is delayed?" The opportunity to address differences might be overlooked if the needs of the child are urgent. Yet failing to address value difference can affect future discussion with the parent under conditions that relate to deeply held values.

That value differences occur with clients comes as no surprise. When we choose to ignore or not deal with such differences, we may justify our actions in any number of ways. We may recognize at the same time that long-term learning by the client may not occur without concerted reflection on underlying values and the conflicts that such values trigger under specific conditions.

The case listed earlier of the parent who believes in the merits of corporal punishment offers a relevant example. Our current heightened awareness of child abuse has focused the attention of many professionals on the physical and mental status of children. We look for signs of potential abuse, and seek to confirm the existence of circumstances that place a child at-risk. Many parents in the last five years have experienced a seemingly frosty reception from emergency care personnel as they dealt with bruises, fractures, or abrasions of a child. We can identify with the priorities of a professional caregiver working to deal with the presenting problem (e.g., fracture) while attempting to establish the circumstances under which the injury occurred. The

parent, meanwhile, is concerned about the child, yet faces an institution that has responsibilities beyond the simple mending of wounds. Some parents have experienced the consequences of offering stories of a child's injuries that conflict with the child's version, given out of the parent's hearing.

When our professional responsibilities extend beyond simple direct services to a client (not that such services are uncomplicated!), we must insure that parents have multiple opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills, or self-confidence so that they are better able to perform their responsibilities. The parent who believes in corporal punishment, for example, must be exposed to alternative means of discipline if either current practices are not successful or the parent recognizes that very real limits exist to a continued reliance on punishment techniques. Parents may benefit from exposure to new perspectives on children's behavior or alternative means of talking or acting with a child. We can expose the parent to new knowledge and skills through parent education and training.

As is true in international politics, participants can work toward common goals without sharing identical values or beliefs about the reasons for their actions. Given the time frame and agenda of meetings between professionals and parents (and the general nature of services offered by the professional), many practitioners are unwilling to veer far from the general priorities of conferences. Educators who perceive themselves as unskilled or uninterested in dealing with emotions or value values might steer clear of strategies that would direct the conference away from its stated agenda.

Value differences can reflect discrepancies in worldview or acculturation. Differences relating to socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic identity, gender, sexual preference, religion, and other factors can influence the priorities and more basic objectives of either participant in the conference. Ignoring value differences may result in failure to offer services that are acceptable to the parent. Without identifying the parent's understanding of the options for service, the practitioner could miss an opportunity to promote services that otherwise might be rejected. All professional groups are attempting to cope with the nature of services to diverse consumer groups. Few answers are available now that would constitute a "best practices" approach to the question of how to recognize and integrate client ideas and preferences into a service plan.

At a minimum, we can negotiate with a parent to withhold discussion of value conflicts until resolution is achieved for a problem being experienced by the child. The parent conference gives us multiple opportunities to understand the parent's thoughts and emotions, but only if

we structure our remarks and questions to draw out the parent. With a clearer understanding of the parent's values, we can offer to further our understanding of them (and they of us) in another encounter, and direct attention during the conference toward helping the child master the challenges of the classroom.

2. Emotions of the Parent

The link between one's values and emotions may seem obvious. The reader will recognize that core values over time become submerged in a web of cognitions that can interfere with ready understanding of a linkage with present emotions. Lawrence and Hunter (1978) discuss three aspects of one's emotions during a conference. Our displayed emotions may be a characteristic emotional state, a temporary emotion state, or a reflection of an underlying value system.

Characteristic emotional state. All of us behave in a more-or-less consistent fashion over time. We display a temperament by which we become known. Whether that temperament is in-born or acquired, our actions reflect predispositions.

At another level of consideration, Lawrence and Hunter pose the importance of past experiences with the institution offering service. One's previous encounters with schools (and the professionals who work in them) can influence the emotions and actions of the client. The Lawrence and Hunter text offers the example of parents entering schools, and remembering their own experiences as a student. When experience have been positive, the parent may come to a conference ready to focus on the topics to be considered. When past experiences have been negative, the parent may be thinking about previous encounters with educators (or other school staff) and be less focused on current circumstances.

A colleague tells the story of his experience as a young teacher. One day he was the last teacher in the building when a truck drove up carrying a parent. The parent's son, a 15 year old, had been experiencing academic problems in the teacher's class. The parent looked angry and the teacher was not sure whether he should remain to talk alone with the parent or seek out a witness to the encounter. The teacher decided to wait for the parent, who began the meeting with tears in his eyes! The parent related a story of his own experiences in school. One day, rather than deal with a teacher, he left school for the last time (at age 16). The parent knew what life was like without a high school education and wanted his son to finish his studies. The parent was willing to work with the school to help his son. The father mentioned that this was the first time that he had entered a school since leaving at age 16. His emotions relating to

education were so strong that it took the potential failure of his son to push him to enter a school again.

Strong emotions tied to being a parent play a role in shaping the parent's perceptions. Most parents hold deep emotions towards their offspring and want them to succeed. Parents often mention feelings of guilt when asked what brought them to a conference. Some writers have characterized our society as fostering behavior fueled by guilt (Goldfarb 1991). Whatever the mechanism that motivates parental involvement, we can recognize that what attracts a parent to a conference need not be the merits of the case we present or our abilities as a professional. The perspective of the parent almost always will be on the child as perceived over a lifetime of parenting, not over the period of time within which we have served a child.

Relating to the emotions that fuel a parent, a theme that arises with some parents is their desire to do what their parents failed to do. Whether the actions involve mere attendance at a school event or taking the time to meet with a professional, some parents strive to provide a model by which their children will behave with their own offspring. We can assist such parents by being models of good communication and understanding their concerns as parents.

Temporary emotional state. The tone of the conference will be influenced by the emotions being experienced that day by the parent (and, of course, by the professional). Few adults look forward to meetings with professional care providers, whether the services to be offered are directed at the adult or the child. No matter what the nature of our professional self-concepts, we seldom elicit joy when we schedule meetings with parents.

The schools within which we work trigger similar emotions. To complicate the nature of the emotions we observe in the parent, the normative stressors of everyday life will have an impact, affecting the emotional display of the parent. For example, if we offer our services in an urban area, the parent will use public or private transportation, in most cases, to reach the location in which the meeting will be held. The pressure of navigating in a city, locating a parking space within a convenient distance of the meeting place, and walking in safety to the site can influence the perceptions of the upcoming meeting, its need, and ultimate value.

The content of the session, with its focus on the child, will trigger further emotions. Even in a seemingly benign reporting conference, during which the professional has only "good news" to convey, the parent may be tense in anticipation of an expected "bad news" message. We can identify with such anxiety—few of us would claim a complete lack of anxiety as we head into encounters with professionals that provide services to us.

Under less benign conditions, the parent may be very tense, angry, or hostile and even attempt to pressure towards a specific goal. Some parents have been reported to display hostility to influence a school district to provide services that might not have been offered otherwise. The point being made here is basic: we must never assume that the parent enters into a meeting with a neutral emotional state. The thoughts of the parent will be focused on the expected and the actual messages that are related to the issues under discussion. The professional can honor the feelings being displayed nonverbally or verbally by commenting in a general way about feelings that can be experienced during such meeting, applying the communication skills of reflection or perception checks to process emotions, or disclosing his or her own emotions.

Recognition that temporary emotions can affect thoughts or behaviors during the session can result in the professional and parent moving back and forth between the content and the process of the session. Failure to separate the content and emotions present during a meeting can produce less than optimal outcomes for both parties.

Reflection of Underlying Value System. Each meeting between professional and parent will involve ideas and actions that are reflections of underlying values, assumptions, and beliefs. The skilled practitioner will enact many of the values that are embedded within the culture of the profession that he or she represents, in addition to more personal values that reflect upbringing and other experiences. The parent will bring similar belief systems into the encounter.

An example of a conflict between parties that could reflect deeply held values could involve recommendations for family counseling. Assume, for example, that a classroom teacher became aware of a family's troubles in coping with a recent economic downturn. The father had lost his job in a machine shop and the mother had been laid-off from work on an assembly line. Difficulties between the adults and the children had escalated to the point of verbal battles, one result of which was a sixth-grade student's comment that he feared that he would be beaten for a bad report card. The mother, who attended the reporting conference, was offended by the teacher's suggestion that the family might benefit from a community-based program that offered counseling to families under similar economic circumstances. The conference ended with the parent telling the teacher to keep out of family concerns.

That are few ways of remedying conflicts between the values of the professional and parent, whatever the topic under discussion. Some authors (Johnson 1980; Berger 1987) suggest that conflicts can be brought to the surface so that all parties can have the opportunity to be clear

about what motivates the other. Such discussions could involve the participants clarifying ideas with the goal of reaching a common understanding prior to collaboration in problem solving.

3. Problem Ownership

The concept of "problem ownership" appears often in the counseling literature (see, for example, Glasser 1969, 1990; Ehly and Dustin 1989). The definition of the term relates to the locus of responsibility for problem solving. For example, Glasser (1969) discussed the difficulties that a child might be having in a classroom, and how a teacher can direct attention to what the child must do to accept responsibility for his or her behavior and to commit to more acceptable behavior. A child who has trouble relating with his peers might be able, with teacher guidance, to acknowledge those actions that contribute to his difficulties. A basic element of problem ownership is recognizing and accepting responsibility for what you have done. With such acceptance, the teacher can assist the child identify and implement alternative actions that will improve relations with peers.

During a conference between professional and parent, the notion of problem ownership is always relevant, even when the agenda of the session does not appear to be problem-oriented. Professionals, by the structure and nature of their remarks consistently act in a way that reflects responsibility for all services that are under their control or supervision. When parents request information that we can provide or that we can assist them in locating, we maintain our status as individuals who recognize our responsibilities in assisting clients.

The parent may exhibit behaviors that reflect acceptance of responsibility for thoughts, emotions, and actions. The concept of problem ownership becomes a concern when either party behaves in a manner that violates the premise that he or she accepts responsibility for or a commitment to the outcome of the encounter. As noted above, we can serve as a model to the parent by communicating via I-messages and avoiding evaluative "you" statements or questions. These skills can further our chances for a productive meeting. Although necessary, the techniques are not sufficient to guarantee a positive outcome.

We must negotiate, in some instances, with the parent to identify the elements of the problem-solving process for which each party will accept responsibility. Consider the case of a parent of a handicapped preschooler who has sought services from a local community agency. The school psychologist and special education teacher who interview the parent discover that the parent has used services from five community agencies in the past year, and has been described by a school principal as "shopping around" for the best program for her child. The practitioner may

foresee difficulty implementing an effective program of services if the parent maintains only limited commitment to the school's program. On the other hand, the parent can be admired for the time and effort he has devoted to seeking the best package of services for his child. The teacher can paraphrase his understanding of the parent's comments on recent services, and attempt to assess what the parent is ultimately striving to achieve.

While recognizing that a single interview may not produce sufficient opportunities to establish rapport with a parent, the practitioner may elect to negotiate with the parent to enroll the child, on a trial basis, for a set period of time before evaluating the effectiveness of the services offered. Both the school and the parent may agree to a contract allowing adequate time for implementation of a service plan. All parties can agree on who is responsible for delivering services and by what criteria those services will be evaluated.

One outgrowth of the discussion relating to service acceptability can be a deeper understanding of the parent, let alone fostering the parent's appreciation for the professional's efforts to clarify the thoughts and actions of the parent. The two parties can begin to negotiate (1) whether the school or teacher can offer what the parent is seeking, (2) the minimal commitment the school must have from the parent if the impact of any service is to be perceived or assessed, and (3) the roles of all parties in developing and implementing immediate or long-term plans for service.

Commitment and responsibility reside at the heart of all efforts to effect change. Given what is known about treatment integrity, acceptability, and follow-through (see Meichenbaum and Turk 1987), the professional is well advised to devote time to assessing perceptions of problem ownership prior to finalizing agreements on service-related activities.

4 Types of Conferences

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) have proposed four basic formats for conferences. Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) and Ehly, Conoley, and Rosenthal (1985) discuss additional concepts for structuring meetings with parents. Schools, mental health agencies, medical service providers, and other providers of services to families use conferences to convey information, discuss possibilities for action, and negotiate priorities. Thus, the conference is a familiar form of contact between families and professionals. The sections below will provide an overview (using Lawrence and Hunter's labels) for commonly encountered options for setting up parent conferences. In considering the four options for conferences, review the overall structure that

has been presented for preparing for a conference (Box 5.4). This structure will be applied in all forms of conferences.

Group Conferences. The opportunity to meet with large numbers of parents seldom occurs outside of the open house that many schools hold for their communities. Group conferences provide an opportunity to discuss important issues with large numbers of parents with the added bonus of featuring children and their work. Many parents come willingly to schools to view artwork, musical performances, and other events such as science fairs when their children's work is featured. The lure of these school events decreases markedly when the children no longer attend that facility.

Some schools develop group conferences to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Parents become acquainted with the child's teacher and school staff;
2. Parents view the classroom, see and handle curricular materials, and hear a presentation on classroom expectations;
3. Parents hear ways that they can help their children meet class objectives;
4. Parents learn how they will be informed about academic and behavioral progress (and concerns);
5. Parents raise concerns of general interest (e.g., lunchroom policies). (Lawrence and Hunter, 1978, p. 6)

Being able to confine the meeting to the concerns of all parents can accomplish a great deal. The parent is provided with a sense of the school's structure and expectations, and learns about avenues by which the parent and school will discuss the child's status and progress. A parent at the group conference can ask for additional time to discuss an individual child, without disrupting the group nature of the session.

Box 5.4 Preparing for a Conference

Deciding what can be accomplished

Establishing the conference objective

Planning for the conference

- What information or questions?
- How to convey it?

Deciding how to start the conference

Formulating your message

- What language to use?
- Avoiding words that block communication
- Using enabling phrases
- Time-referenced statements
- Comments on the parent's contributions
- Supportive comments
- Comment to maintain focus

Checking back on what was heard

- Validating
- Summarizing

Closing the conference

- Bridging to the future

Judging the success of the conference

- Following up
- Getting feedback

From: Lawrence, G. and M. Hunter 1978. Parent-teacher conferencing. El Segundo: TIP Publications.

The possibility for conducting group conferences exists in any school, regardless of the age or abilities of the children, yet many districts restrict their large-group activities to informal open houses or performance events that involve children. Schools and other service agencies that coordinate services with schools can feature all activities that attract the community and the families it serves. The benefits of a group conference, however, extend beyond public relations and the display of artistic or athletic programs. A group conference can reinforce a school's message of welcome to parents, while defining clear directions by which the parents can solicit services or assistance of any type. A side benefit is providing exposure to the school and the staff in the hope that the parent feels more comfortable and open to returning for other, even more structured, encounters. Staff members acquire an identify outside of the narrow confines of the one-to-one conferences that most parents see when they participate in reporting or problem-solving conferences. One can only hope that by appearing more "human," the professional will minimize the anxieties that accompany the parent when he or she returns.

Benefits of group conferences extend to the school staff. By meeting with parents, hearing their questions, comments, and concerns, the staff can begin to reflect on how best to work with parents over the coming months. Parent interest in school programs is highly motivating to teachers!

Reporting Conferences. The format most commonly seen in schools and other service agencies is the reporting conference. The popularity of the format reflects both the merits of the conference structure for the dissemination of information and the wide acceptance of the format among school personnel and parents. Rotter, Robinson, and Fey (1987) discuss the critical importance of communication skills during the conference and the need for constant attention to the parent's words and emotions. If the teacher fails to recognize the parent's agenda and needs, the likelihood of continuing to attract and maintain the parent's involvement will be diminished.

Reporting information to the parent may appear to be a straightforward process of linking descriptions of the child, but the task is much more complicated. While the success of the conference is related directly to the skill with which the teacher describes the child's behavior so that the parent can understand, the teacher must be aware of any cues from the parent that signal lack of understanding, discomfort, or a desire to speak. Nothing can be more intimidating to a parent than to have a teacher talk non-stop about events in the classroom. Give-and-take in communication remains a priority during the reporting conference.

Thus, the essential skills of effective communication are featured throughout the conference. For review, you may wish to refer to earlier lessons for an extended discussion of the relevance and application of specific communication techniques during meetings with parents. These techniques help insure that the process of the encounter flows smoothly so that the content of the conference, reports on the child, can be delivered and understood.

Teacher preparation for the conference is all-important, argues Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016). Both are convinced that the teacher can develop a file for each student, so that samples of the child's work and teacher anecdotes can be maintained for later use and display during conferences. The student can be given a role in compiling materials that s/he would like the parent to see.

Lawrence and Hunter (1978) agree that teacher preparation is essential for a successful conference. The authors write that successful reporting is related to three actions of the teacher:

1. Conveying information to the parent that is a valid reflection of the student. The teacher can sift through the wealth of his or her impressions of the student and the work that the student has produced to create a verbal picture of the child. That picture will be a familiar one to the parent, and should be created to convince the parent that the teacher understands the capabilities and limitations of the child and of the classroom environment;
2. Conveying information in words that are clear and understandable. Educational or psychological jargon is to be avoided, unless the teacher is able to translate complex terms into the words of everyday language. The teacher may be able to function entirely without jargon except in providing information about the child's performance on standardized tests;
3. Negotiating in advance with the parent as to the emphasis during the conference. For example, should the teacher prepare a complete report on all phases of the child's efforts and development or should one or two dimensions of performance be highlighted? Advance discussion with the parent concerning objectives and content of the conference is strongly encouraged by Lawrence and Hunter (1978).

Rutherford and Edgar (1979) consider the types of information that are likely to be provided to the parent during a conference. The authors discuss (1) performance and (2) educational process.

Information on **performance** is featured during all reporting conferences. From the child's first involvement with the school, the parent(s) will be interested (or concerned) about the child's abilities and growth. How, then, can the teacher best answer the voiced questions of the parent and the underlying anxieties that the questions may reflect? While report cards are distributed by almost every school, Rutherford and Edgar (1979) are convinced that "(o)ne of the biggest failures of American education has been its inability to explain to parents (and unfortunately often to children) what the end product of the educational process should be." (p. 5)

Goals for children can be defined in areas such as academic performance, social development, emotional development, physical development, and classroom behavior (Lawrence and Hunter 1978), yet the teacher is faced with demonstrating to the parent that these goals are important to the individual child, that the teacher has done everything possible to achieve these goals, and that the child has made important progress towards these goals. Quite a collection of challenges to the teacher, especially given that an entire classroom of children will be described before the end of the parent conference period!

Information on the **educational process** may be just as important to the parent as descriptions on the child's performance. Rutherford and Edgar (1979) make two points that many teachers would appreciate about parents' awareness of the educational process—parents' knowledge of educational process may be based on their own experiences as students, and "most information parents receive about schools comes from their children." (p. 12) No matter what the age of students, the information they provide about schools to their parents may be (at best) incomplete or (at worst) a distortion of what actually occurred.

Many parents are interested in the methods that teachers use to educate or interact with students. A parent may seek information concerning the discipline style and actions of a teacher. Parents' interest in methods can be met in any of a number of ways during and outside of a conference. While in a conference, the teacher can elaborate on the methods and materials used to work with the child. The teacher may have handouts or other printed materials on methods that the parent can have or borrow. Parents might want to borrow textbooks so that they can better understand what their children are expected to master.

Rutherford and Edgar suggest that the parent can be invited to the classroom and allowed to observe. Structuring the observation so that the parent has a clear idea of what the teacher is attempting will enhance the parent's understanding of methods. One teacher objective for the parent's visit will be the demonstration that parents are a vital element of the child's education, a valued member of the total team working to nurture the child. An emphasis on involvement that stresses "we are in this together" builds an important bond between the parent and teacher (Burgess and Johnston 1987).

Parents will vary as to the intensity and frequency of their contacts with the teacher. Some parents are very aware of what the teacher is attempting and what has been accomplished with a specific child. Such parents are important members already of the team supporting the child. Negotiating with the parent on the objectives of the conference can stretch the teacher's creativity in finding topics that will reinforce involvement without repeating information that the parent already knows. Some parents, on the other hand, are more than happy to hear the teacher repeat for the third or fourth time glowing stories about the child. Under circumstances of high previous parent involvement, the teacher must be skilled at eliciting statements of parent preference and strive to maintain interest.

Some parents, however, have not been involved previously with the teacher. Negotiating with the parent on conference content may coincide with efforts to convince the parent to attend. Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) believe that a parent is more likely to attend if s/he has a voice in determining what will be covered. If the parent is relatively out-of-touch with the child's performance and the educational methods used in the classroom, the teacher can offer to provide a complete overview of both areas.

Whatever information on performance is provided, the teacher now must decide how best to communicate. The best strategy available is description, without evaluation or inference added, of the child's performance. Lawrence and Hunter (1978) argue that in many instances, performance in several areas will prove important. A teacher might describe performance in the areas of academics, social development, emotional development, physical development, and classroom behavior.

The teacher, while providing information in a descriptive manner, will be responsible for communicating an assessment of the child's progress. Many parents openly will request an evaluation of the child's standing in the class. If the teacher has succeeded in providing a clear picture of the child's performance, the parent will have essential data available to understand

the teacher's remarks on the child's standing in the classroom. Lawrence and Hunter (1978) state that judgments concerning the child's performance and behavior are "part of our professional responsibility." (p. 11)

Four strategies to convey information on how the child is progressing are offered by Lawrence and Hunter. Each can be used separately or with other strategies during any reporting conference.

Comparing the child's performance to peers. A child's performance can be described in relation to that of other children in the classroom, other children his or her age in the school district, and other children nation-wide. Comparing children to a national sample is common on norm-referenced tests of intelligence and achievement. Instruments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the Iowa Test of Educational Development are common in many school districts. Test publishers provide many suggestions on the means by which the teacher can describe the test and the child's performance in relation to normative groups.

The teacher may elect to discuss the child's performance in relation to other children in the current classroom. For example, "John's success at math suggests he is one of the most able students in our class. I often give him extra assignments to challenge him." Teachers work, as well, with students who are struggling with their assignments. "Steve takes more time than many of his classmates to complete his work and when he is done, I make sure that I give him quick feedback on how he has done."

Comments comparing the child to classmates can be accompanied by samples, covering a period of time, of work on assignments. If the teacher maintains records of overall class performance, information comparing the child to class averages may be available for review by the parent.

Finally, veteran teachers become very familiar with the range of abilities of the children found in a typical classroom. The experienced fourth grade teacher, for example, will know what to expect of the typical fourth grader. Comparing a child's progress to other children that the teacher has served is a viable option for reporting. Veteran teachers may remember children with similar patterns of skills and can offer positive comments to parents that reflect the ability of children to learn and mature. The teacher should be cautious, however, of too directly comparing a current student with students from previous school years. Each child presents a unique collection of experiences and abilities, being capable of modifying our judgments if given the opportunity. Caplan (1970) has noted that, at the extreme, lack of objectivity can affect our

judgments and prevent us from considering a full range of possibilities for working with our primary clients, children.

Describing the child's growth within a period of time. By providing the parent with information about the time frame within which we have worked with the child on a particular task or topic, we alert the parent to both the intensity of our efforts and the nature of the progress of the child over the identified period. For example, "Jane and her group have worked on identifying phonemes for the past three weeks. She was uncertain of her abilities during our first few sessions, but now actively offers answers, which are usually correct."

Children develop in fits and starts, especially at early ages. The better we can identify for parents the realities of the child's development, the more we will succeed in creating a verbal picture of how the child is doing. Many teachers appreciate a child's efforts at learning. Descriptions of growth can include information on what the child does that contributes to success in the classroom.

Parents appreciate our attempts at explanation of what the child has done (Rutherford and Edgar 1979). Using time-referenced statements, teachers have an effective means of increasing the parent's awareness of what and how long activities have taken place in the classroom, and to what effect.

Describing strengths and weaknesses. Presenting a balance of information about the child may result in offering details about the child's apparent successes and failures. Because many children do not perform over a wide range of achievement levels, the teacher often can describe relative strengths and weaknesses. Children may perform at a higher level than their peers on one task but not another, or may prefer to work on one subject while avoiding involvement with another aspect of class work. On a behavioral level, a child may relate to peers quite well on a one-to-one basis, but act out in-group settings.

The teacher can offer information that helps the parent to see that the child experiences a variety of outcomes in academic, social-emotional, and behavioral areas. By presenting samples of the child's work, the teacher can provide the parent with a valid picture of the child's performance in a number of work areas.

Two limitations may affect the teacher's decision to use statements describing strengths and weaknesses. Using words such as "strengths" or "weaknesses" or terms such as "success" or "failure" implies a judgment of the child's abilities. The parent who understands that your

intention is to indicate the child's relative levels of performance, especially if you present an abundance of samples of the child's work, will be able to grasp your intended message during the conference. The goal of informing the parent of the child's performance is best met if the parent can understand the basis of your evaluative comments. The parent must be able to appreciate that the child's abilities and behavior, the teacher's methods, interactions with classmates, and the curriculum all interact to influence the child's performance in class.

An additional concern for the teacher is strategic. In attending previous conferences, some parents experience the "good news, bad news" form of feedback from teachers. "Johnny is doing a fine job of helping me clean blackboards, but is failing in math." In keeping with the suggestions offered already in this lesson, I maintain that the teacher and parent are best served if information is presented in a clear, precise, and descriptive manner. The child's relative successes will be apparent from information presented on progress. The parent can question the teacher about the meaning of the performance ("Is he likely to do better by the end of the year?"), and the teacher can provide additional feedback intended to enhance understanding.

Describing the child's response to special help. When the teacher has worked with the child in special ways to improve development in academics, behavior, and other areas, the parent can be provided with details. The teacher, for example, may have noted that the child was having a difficult time finding materials that interested him to use during independent reading time. In searching for themes that would attract the student's interest, the teacher may have experimented with several types of stories and formats (e.g., books, magazines). Having succeeded in locating materials that appealed to the child, the teacher could report to the parent on what had occurred. The parent could benefit from the information and provide additional materials at home for the child's use.

In a different example, a teacher became concerned that a child was not relating appropriately with peers. After observing several arguments and struggles with classmates, the teacher paid special attention to the child's difficulties in solving disagreements with peers. After talking with the child, the teacher decided to involve the child in a small group being led by a student teacher on the topic of "making friends." The child loved the group and seemed to be interacting more successfully with peers. The child's response to the teacher's guidance could be described to the parent during the reporting conference.

Closing comments. The reporting conference is a vital form of interaction with parents. Much that is of importance to the teacher is covered during an individual session. While many parents are eager to hear exactly what the teacher has to offer, others will come with mixed feelings about the child's involvement in school. A parent, for example, who has experienced a series of parent conferences containing little about the child that could be labeled positive, might dread another report of a child's difficulties.

All parents, however, who attend the conference are signaling their interest in the child and the school. Johnson (1990) reinforced the value of parent-teacher encounters for building bridges between the home and school. The presence of the parent offers an opportunity to demonstrate that the teacher is working in the best interests of the parent and child. On those occasions in which the child attends a portion of the conference, the teacher can emphasize the mutual responsibilities that all parties have towards insuring success (Guyton and Fielstein 1989).

In bringing a conference to a close, the teacher can paraphrase what has been discussed, signal interest in talking again soon, and agree on who will inform the child about the discussion during the conference (Lawrence and Hunter 1978). The parent and teacher can arrange for a specific form of contact (e.g., a telephone call at a certain time), or agree to initiate contact whenever a question arises about the child.

The point about informing the child is important if the child has not been involved in the conference. Some teachers have described their practice of meeting with each student prior to the conference to review what will be said. The teachers report that many fewer children become anxious about talking with their parents after the conference. Pre-conference reviews with students can be used to underline the teacher's commitment to the student's progress. Providing honest feedback to students may have an additional outcome—greater trust between teacher and student.

Information-Getting Conferences. Lawrence and Hunter (1978) describe a third conference format with the somewhat awkward label of information-getting conference. In many ways, their description of the conference option resembles a combination of an interview and the problem analysis elements (see below) of a problem-solving conference. The intended use of the option is well worth considering under select circumstances.

Because children learn from all of their experiences, the teacher often has a limited knowledge about the full extent of a child's capabilities. Lawrence and Hunter suggest that when the teacher believes that information can be provided by the parent to help the teacher develop

better school programs, the information-getting conference can be arranged. Parents, with their wealth of experiences in raising the child and their awareness (even if limited) of the child's life outside of school, are gold mines of information on the child's behavior, emotions, and habits. Tapping into that gold mine can present the teacher with important information that can be used to work with the child.

Lawrence and Hunter recommend that the teacher attempting to acquire information from the parent request specific forms of information. Rather than going on a "fishing expedition," the teacher can explain why such information is needed and how the parent's input will be used. For example, a teacher unsure about how to motivate a child in class may seek out the parent's suggestions. Parents will be able to provide anecdotal evidence about what works to motivate the child. In this example, the teacher can alert the parent to the need for help, describe what has been done to motivate the child and to what effect, and relate how the parent's suggestions might be implemented.

The teacher has been successful if the parent understands how the child will benefit from the parent's participation in the conference. On occasion, the teacher may attempt to convince the parent that the assistance provided will help the child at school and at home, or stimulate the child so that s/he is happier or self-confident, changes which can have an impact on the home and family.

The child who arrives mid-year with no records may prove to be a puzzle to the teacher. A conference with the parent, to review previous school programs and to seek information that will help the teacher understand the child, can prove to be a good investment of the teacher's and parent's time.

Whatever the situation, the parent who helps the teacher has earned the right to quick feedback concerning the impact of suggestions on the child's school performance. A telephone call of thanks to the parent could include a brief summary of what the teacher has done and to what effect. Short notes at a later time can offer progress reports as well.

Lawrence and Hunter suggest using an information-getting conference to solicit information that will help the teacher to assess the effectiveness of school programs. The teacher can approach the parent to determine what effects, if any, activities or changes at school have had on the child. For example, teachers may re-arrange seating in the class or change assignments to students. If unsure about the reactions of a child to such changes, a teacher can call the

parent to see if the child has reported any problems or behaved in any way that might signal an emotional reaction to the school situation.

In checking with the parent, the teacher may discover other concerns of the parent that might relate to events in the classroom. For example, a parent was very upset about her child's relations with a group of classmates from the neighborhood. The parent had noticed that the children were quite mean to her son and had been observed to push him around. The mother had talked with the son and encouraged him to stay away for the children. The son, however, came home with reports about being mistreated by the children at school. When told of the parent's concern, the teacher was amazed. At no time in class had the son or his classmates been observed to behave in the manner described. In fact, the teacher was convinced at first that the child was not telling the parent the truth about previous interactions with peers.

After promising the parent to monitor the situation, the teacher discovered several subtle attempts at intimidation that three children were using with the child. Circumstances were even more aversive on the playground. The teacher was able to intervene and, after a three-week period of monitoring the children, was able to report to the parent on an improved school situation for the child.

In summary, the information-getting conference can be implemented when the teacher needs another perspective on the child's capabilities and behavior. Parents are not only expert witnesses to their own interactions with the child; they may have experience observing the child with siblings, peers, and other adults. Children may present themselves in very different ways depending on the circumstances that they face. The better that the teacher can understand the full range of the child's responses to his or her environment, the better the teacher can adjust interventions to promote development and growth.

Problem-Solving Conferences. The final conference option can be used by the teacher to involve the parent in collaborative problem solving. The emphasis on collaboration is essential. The teacher and the parent must agree on the importance of the need for an intervention with the child, and devote their time together to developing a plan that will require the collective energies of parent and teacher.

The problem-solving conference can be described as a **triadic relationship**, in which the teacher (service provider) works with the parent (service consumer) to benefit a third party (the child or client). There are important similarities between the activities of a problem-solving conference and those of parent-teacher consultation.

The literature on problem solving with parents is broad and is addressed in several portions of this course. Lawrence and Hunter (1978) identify problem-solving conferences as an important avenue to intervene in academic and behavioral problems. They propose that three areas of school problems may merit collaboration with parents and use of the problem-solving conference: (1) the child is not physically or emotionally prepared to learn; (2) the child requires additional opportunities or experience with certain experiences; or (3) the child needs guidance and support for improvements in behavior.

There are many factors that influence a child's readiness to benefit from school experiences. Many families recognize that adequate nourishment and rest and a stable home environment are essential to children's ability to succeed in school. Yet life in the home and community may be quite stressful and not conducive to producing alert and prepared learners.

When children come to school tired or hungry or have difficulty concentrating and completing their assignments, due to whatever reason, teachers are faced with the challenge of motivating and even counseling children. Teachers "make do" with children no matter how the children present themselves in the classroom. With the support services available in many schools, teachers can supplement classroom programs and develop necessary interventions with children as needed.

The teacher may become aware that the parent could assist in addressing some of the problems that a child brings into the classroom. The teacher, for example, who has a child come into class 10 minutes late every day can arrange to meet with the parent to discuss how home and school could cooperate to help the child start class on time. Talking with a parent about the child can provide both parties with important information about the other's priorities and interactions with the child. Communication on issues that concern the teacher often will elicit a similar expression from the parent.

Some children attract the teacher's attention because of their eagerness to learn or their steady improvement in class activities. Operating on the principle that the home provides a natural extension of the school's efforts (if not the reverse direction of influence!), the teacher can meet with parents to promote educational activities in the home. The current literature on homework (Keith 1987) suggests that children can benefit from additional practice of instructional activities. The teacher's perception of the child's social skills or physical development may result in meeting with the parent to discuss what the family could do at home to increase the child's abilities.

When behavior in the classroom or in other areas of the school produces conflict between the child and teacher or the child and peers, the teacher may intervene to help the child experience greater success. The parent can be recruited to provide recognition and reinforcement of the child's efforts to get along with others. Some children may be uncertain of their abilities or lack the confidence to initiate activities. Teachers can work with parents to acknowledge successes at school and to insure that children's emotional needs are recognized in both the home and the school.

The teacher interested in collaborating with parents can employ the problem-solving conference to involve the parent in the development of an intervention that could be used in the child's classes or at home. The first tasks of the teacher during the problem-solving conference include the following:

- describing the child's school performance or behavior so that the parent has a clear picture of what the child is doing
- providing samples of the child's work or other data that will assist the parent understand how the child is performing
- documenting what the teacher has done to help the child and what have been the outcomes of previous intervention efforts.

The successful depiction of the child's behavior forms an essential foundation not only to parental understanding but to the establishment of a basis for cooperation between parent and teacher. The teacher acknowledges the parent's expertise and tries to draw on the parent's understanding of the child to create an intervention plan. The work of the teacher extends to include helping the parent emerge as a true collaborator in addressing the child's school behaviors. Box 5.5 provides Lawrence and Hunter's (1978) proposals for the parent's goals as collaborators during the problem-solving conference. The success of the teacher in establishing a cooperative venture will rest on being able to assist the parent achieve awareness and commitment to each of the listed goals.

Teachers and parents direct their efforts during the problem-solving conference to develop plans to help children. A plan could involve the teacher intervening in the classroom and reporting back to the parent, who may have the responsibility of providing the child with reinforcement and recognition of progress. A second possibility would involve the teacher and parent making commitments to an intervention in both home and school. The parent, for example, may promise to initiate a home program similar to that of the school in addressing

behaviors such as acting out, use of offensive language, or other concerns experienced by teacher and parent.

While recognizing that the parent is a potential ally for collaborative interventions with the child, the teacher remains aware that the parent may lack knowledge, skill, or confidence essential to developing and implementing a home-based program of intervention. Knowledge about specific techniques that could be used in the home with the child is readily available in books and magazines. Materials on educational activities for the home may be available in the school from parent education resources. Many teachers, over their careers, fill file drawers with handouts and articles on childrearing and educational topics. Parents can be exposed to a wealth of information on an array of topics.

Helping parents acquire skills to intervene with the child can challenge the teacher's skills as an educator, this time of adults. Many parents have prerequisite skills for home interventions, and can be given tips on the when and how of interventions. The teacher can role-play with the parent to try out specific forms of communication or interaction with the child. In one case, a parent was unclear just how he would respond when his son earned a reward covered by his home intervention plan. The parent felt awkward using the token economy system employed at the school. Using role playing, the teacher worked with the parent to practice what the parent would say and do when the child earned a reinforcer or engaged in a behavior that was targeted in the intervention plan for a response by the parent.

Box 5.5 Problem-solving Conferences—Parents' Goals as Collaborators

To be able to:

1. **Identify the child's school behaviors that need changing**
2. **Determine what the teacher will do at school**
3. **Identify the child's behaviors at home that are the same or contribute to the problem**
4. **Identify parent behaviors that may accentuate the problem**
5. **Agree to do something which is productive and within your ability**
6. **Identify alternative actions and select those most feasible and promising in altering the child's behavior**
7. **Select reinforcers that are likely to promote the child's behavior**
8. **Be clear on how to put any plans into effect. If needed, receive instruction**
9. **Carry out your plan at home**
10. **Follow-up with the teacher, getting feedback, support, evaluation, help with snags.**

From: Lawrence, G. and M. Hunter. 1978. Parent-teacher conferencing. El Segundo: TIP Publications, 21–22.

The parent lacking in self-confidence or apparent motivation may appear to be a daunting challenge to even the most skilled teacher. As a teacher, you may encounter parents who are unwilling to take an active role in an intervention. When the parent possesses, according to the teacher's assessment, sufficient knowledge and skill to succeed, the teacher can suggest guided practice or role-play with the parent. Developing confidence in one's abilities as a parent is difficult, especially after years of perceived failure by the parent. The teacher can help some parents who are low in their self-confidence by recommending parent education programs, assertiveness training, and other community programs that promote the empowerment of parents (see Lightfoot 1986, for a critique of the assumptions of empowerment).

The work during plan development and implementation requires the teacher to implement the essential communication skills described earlier in this course and follow the general format for a conference identified by Hunter and Lawrence (1978) in this lesson. By involving the parent in the planning of interventions, we can enrich the parent's understanding of how we think and operate in

the classroom. We can demonstrate that while the child's actions may represent a challenge to us, we are prepared to seek out ideas and suggestions that will allow us to continue to foster the child's development and performance. The problem-solving conference format is a challenging one for teachers and parents, and offers opportunities for collaboration around issues that readily attract the attention of all parties.

Closing Comments

Through the use of conferences with the parent, the classroom teacher is offered the potential of the parent's input and feedback on the child's and the school's efforts. Conferences, because of their wide appeal and visibility in schools, can provide a leaping-off point for new forms of parent-teacher cooperation. Teachers who, for personal reasons, choose not to commit time and energy to promoting alternative forms of parent involvement still can improve their parent conferences by implementing the strategies and tactics considered in this chapter. Even if the sole avenue for parent contact is the conference, the teacher can elect to take advantage of every moment with the parent to promote the school's program and to reinforce the parent's actions in support of the child's development. The conference can be an end in itself or an opening to new levels of respect and collaboration.

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WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #3

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **BEFORE** beginning the written assignment, **READ** Chapter 6 in the textbook and the above discussion
- **SELECT** one of the activities from the Chapter 6 list below.
- **SUBMIT** a typed summary of your findings or conclusions after completing the activity. This assignment is worth 60 points.

Chapter 6 Activity List (select one only)

a. Develop a simple newsletter, a note, and a detailed newsletter. Describe how the materials would be used with parents

b. Review Berger and Riojas-Cortez's ideas concerning rephrasing. Develop examples of the use of rephrasing in situations involving parent-teacher communication. Discuss the merits and limits of the technique

c. Discuss roadblocks to communication between parent and teacher. Propose a strategy in which both parties could be guided to overcome roadblocks and misunderstandings

d. Sit in on a staffing or parent-teacher conference. Observe and analyze interactions and outcomes

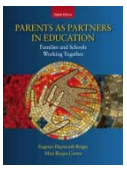
Submit Written Assignment #3 electronically via the ICON Dropbox (**"Written Assignment #3"** folder).

- Complete and submit your assignment BEFORE moving on to the following lesson.
- Instructions on **how to upload your assignment** to the ICON Dropbox are provided on the course site (Content > Assignments).

LESSON 6 – THE PARENT EDUCATION OPTION

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:



- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Review pp. 126-128 and Read Chapter 7

Lesson Overview

This lesson will embed the discussion of parent education in a broad consideration of parenting characteristics. See Appendix A for a table comparing parent education, counseling, and consultation interventions.

Discussion

When parents are uncertain about how to best meet the needs of their children or are seeking guidance on childrearing practices, the educator may be contacted for suggestions. The classroom teacher may be seen as an expert in all matters relating to children (expertise being an important aspect of one's credibility) or may appear more knowledgeable about resources that the parent could consult.

This lesson will consider parent education as an alternative that teachers could recommend or provide to parents indicating an interest in the development of knowledge or skills relating to work with children. As men and women share in the responsibilities of childrearing, the search for guidance and ideas can be intense (Ehrensaft 1987). The quest for information on childrearing has spawned impressive numbers of books written on almost every conceivable aspect of parenting. Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2016) provide information on some options for parent education and training and offers guidelines for the review and evaluation of alternatives. If classroom teachers are to be resource linkers, they will improve the quality of their recommendations by remaining aware of the full range of services available to parents.

The ideas and methods considered will include information directed at parents of children in regular school classrooms, special education programs, and preschool programs. All parent education services are directed at building or enhancing the competence of family members, though parents will be the primary targets for intervention.

The Needs of Parents

The "typical" parent represents a collection of influences from prior family experiences (when the parent was being raised), ideas about childrearing (as shaped by adult life experiences, available models of parenting, preferences of the spouse), and preferences relating to personal goals and ambitions. Jensen and Kingston (1986) draw on the writings of Wood, Bishop, and Cohen (1978) to

describe the broad patterns of parenting to which a parent might subscribe. The patterns of parents as "potters," "gardeners," "maestros," and "consultants" are outlined in Box 6.1.

Whatever the parent's preferences for any of these patterns, the individual adult will behave, at times, in ways that do not match his or her beliefs. The choices parents make in acting as caregivers may not always be ones of which the parent is proud. Teachers can understand the conflicts that parents face when attempting to justify their words or beliefs with their actions. Parent education can offer information that can provide the parent with guidance, but cannot guarantee that parents will correctly implement the suggested means of working with the child.

All parents are concerned with meeting the basic or survival needs of their children. Food, clothing, and shelter are necessities for all children, but parents will vary in their success in providing life's critical necessities to family members. Economic restrictions faced by the family can render the goals of parent education insignificant. Children and their parents must satisfy the basic requirements of survival before the schools can address the goals of parent education.

Jensen and Kingston (1986) review studies that conclude that parents vary along dimensions of restrictiveness vs. permissiveness and of hostility vs. warmth. Parent behavior has important effects on the child, and influences the verbalizations and interactions that the teacher observes in the classroom. Teachers who understand that parents are not always promoting the same ideals that are espoused in the classroom will face a choice point—whether to discuss differences in expectations and values with the parent.

Box 6.1 Four Patterns of Child-Rearing

The Potter believes that

Parents take full responsibility and authority for their children.

Parents determine what a child becomes.

Parents regard mistakes by their children as failures of the parent.

Parents explain their children's feelings to them.

Parents promote constructive activities.

Parents have a strong sense of duty.

Parents reward desirable behavior.

The Gardener believes that

Parents believe in the innate goodness of others.

Parents learn what to expect at different levels of children's development.

Parents accept the uniqueness of each child.

Parents rely on examples and modeling instead of imposing rigid rules.

Parents encourage children to explore their own interests.

Parents set limits that are necessary for children's safety and health.

Parents accept children's behavior as appropriate and right.

The Maestro believes that

Parents practice democracy at all times.

Parents take pride in family accomplishments.

Parents protect each family member's personal life.

Parents carefully design and structure the home environment to meet goals.

Parents assign responsibility to children when they are ready.

The Consultant believes that

Parents work hard to understand themselves.

Parents and children are constantly growing and learning.

Parents know and accept themselves.

Parents relate to their children as equals.

Parents don't worry about what other people think.

FROM: Wood, S. J., R. S. Bishop, and D. Cohen. 1978. Parenting: Four patterns of childrearing, 267. New York: Hart.

Citations

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WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #4

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **BEFORE** beginning the written assignment, **READ** Chapter 7 and review pp. 126-128 in the textbook and read the above discussion
- **SELECT** one of the activities from the Chapter 7 list below.
- **SUBMIT** a typed summary of your findings or conclusions after completing the activity. This assignment is worth 60 points.

Chapter 7 Activity List (select one only)

a. Describe effective icebreakers. Discuss their use in meetings involving parents
b. Make an interaction pattern on an observation wheel. Discuss your findings
c. Attend a parent education meeting. Talk with parents and group leaders. Provide an analysis of the session
d. Develop a plan for a workshop or meeting for parents. Present objectives, questions to be covered, activities, and needed resources
e. Attend a board meeting in your district. Review the activities, considering discussions and outcomes
f. Attend a meeting of a site-based team or parent advisory council. Review the activities, considering discussions and outcomes
g. Develop a format for team building in a local school

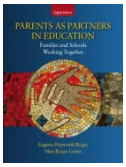
Submit Written Assignment #4 electronically via the ICON Dropbox (**"Written Assignment #4"** folder).

- Complete and submit your assignment BEFORE moving on to the following lesson.
- Instructions on **how to upload your assignment** to the ICON Dropbox are provided on the course site (Content > Assignments).

LESSON 7 – COUNSELING AND REFERRAL

Instructor Comments:

READING ASSIGNMENT:



- **There is no reading assignment from text.** Read carefully the discussion in this lesson.

Lesson Overview

This lesson will provide an overview of the topic of counseling and the importance of effective referral practices.

Discussion

Counseling parents may not, at first glance, appear to be a viable option for the classroom teacher. After all, there are designated counselors, psychologists, and social workers that are available to work with parents in need. Yet, many teachers are aware of situations in which parents come to teachers and ask for advice, guidance, support, or a good listener. Parents may express emotional needs that a teacher believes can be met by offering an opportunity for the parent to meet and discuss those needs.

When does listening to the parent become counseling? Are teachers overstepping their competencies when they perform counseling-like activities? Counseling has been defined as

> a therapeutic and growth process through which individuals are helped to define goals, make decisions, and solve problems related to personal-social, educational, and career concerns. Specialized counseling provides assistance with concerns related to physical and social rehabilitation, employment, mental health, substance abuse, marital and family problems, human sexuality, religious and value choices, career development, and other concerns. (Warner 1980, p. 2)

Counselors attempt to provide an opportunity for a help seeker, or client, to talk.

The relationship established during counseling has important characteristics (George and Cristiani 1990):

1. **Affectiveness**—the counselor and client explore subjective feelings and perceptions more often than cognitive issues (although the theoretical orientation of the counselor will determine the direction of exploration). Content tends to be highly personal, eliciting a mixture of relief and anxiety;

2. **Intensity**—the counseling relationship ideally is open, direct, and honest, and as a consequence is perceived as intense by the client. A premium is placed on openness in the expression of thoughts and feelings;
3. **Growth and change**—the counseling relationship is often characterized as dynamic, undergoing change throughout the client's involvement. As the client changes perceptions and skills, so does the nature of the relationship with the counselor;
4. **Privacy**—confidentiality is essential between the counselor and client. In most locations, there are very specific limitations to what can remain confidential (e.g., mandatory reporting laws require notification when the counselor is informed of certain events or circumstances). The client, once insured of confidentiality, is encouraged to use the situation to self-disclose feelings and thoughts;
5. **Support**—the counselor structures meetings so that the client is provided a stable relationship for taking risks and changing behavior. The actions of the counselor may extend outside of the formal session to include brief contacts over the telephone;
6. **Honesty**—counselors strive to establish credibility and trust, so that all communication is honest and genuine.

The effective counselor is an individual who is perceived as authentic and genuine in the therapeutic relationship, is able to provide a safe and secure atmosphere for clients, and has a high degree of accurate empathic understanding with the client, according to George and Cristiani (1990).

Help with Coping

A common starting point for counseling is the decision by the client to seek assistance to improve coping skills. Several authors have reviewed the ways in which individuals cope and seek support for improved success in coping. Folkman and Lazarus (1988), for example, investigated the relation between coping and emotions. Participants reported how often they used the following types of coping responses to recent stressful events:

- **Confrontive coping:** "I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted."
- **Distancing:** "I went on as if nothing had happened."
- **Self-control:** "I tried to keep my feeling to myself."

- **Seeking social support:** "I talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem."
- **Accepting responsibility:** "I criticized or lectured myself."
- **Escape-avoidance:** "I wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with."
- **Planful problem solving:** "I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work."
- **Positive reappraisal:** "I changed or grew as a person in a good way."

The results, cited by Kleinke (1991), indicate that planful problem solving appeared to be the most effective coping response because it was associated with the most positive emotions. Confrontive coping and distancing turned out to be the least effective coping responses because they were associated with the most negative emotions.

Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) have devised a list of fourteen coping responses:

Active coping (personal correlates: optimism, confidence, self-esteem, low anxiety): "I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem." "I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it." "I do what has to be done, one step at a time."

Planning (personal correlates: optimism, confidence, self-esteem): "I try to come up with a strategy about what to do." "I make a plan of action." "I think hard about what steps to take."

Suppression of competing activities (personal correlates: none): "I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this." "I focus on dealing with this problem and if necessary let other things slide a little." "I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities."

Restraint coping (personal correlates: optimism, low anxiety): "I force myself to wait for the right time to do something." "I hold off doing something about it until the situation permits." "I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon."

Seeking social support for instrumental reasons (personal correlates: optimism): "I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did." "I try to get advice from somewhat about what to do." "I talk to someone to find out more about the situation."

Seeking social support for emotional reasons (personal correlates: none): "I talk to someone about how I feel." "I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives." "I discuss my feelings with someone."

Positive reinterpretation and growth (personal correlates: optimism, confidence, self-esteem, low anxiety): "I look for something good in what is happening." "I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive." "I learn something from the experience."

Acceptance (personal correlate: optimism): "I learn to live with it." "I accept that this has happened and that it can't be changed." "I get used to the idea that it happened."

Turning to religion (personal correlate: optimism): "I seek God's help." "I put my trust in God." "I try to find comfort in my religion."

Focus on and venting of emotion (personal correlates: low confidence, anxiety): "I get upset and let my emotions out." "I let my feelings out." "I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot."

Denial (personal correlates: pessimism, low confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety): "I refuse to believe that it has happened." "I pretend that it hasn't really happened." "I act as though it hasn't happened."

Behavioral disengagement (personal correlates: pessimism, low confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety): "I give up the attempt to get what I want." "I just give up trying to reach my goal." "I admit to myself that I can't deal with it and quit trying."

Mental disengagement (personal correlates: pessimism, low confidence, anxiety): "I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things." "I go to movies or watch TV, to think about it less." "I daydream about things other than this."

Alcohol or drug use (personal correlate: pessimism): "I use alcohol or drugs to make myself to feel better." "I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol or taking drugs." "I use drugs or alcohol to help me get through it."

Kleinke (1991) concludes that it is most adaptive to cope with life challenges by taking an active, self-reliant approach that includes planning and problem solving. It is least adaptive to cope by avoiding and denying the challenge or by responding in an impulsive manner.

One coping skill neglected by most people is the constructive use of a support system. Kleinke suggests testing a support system by answering the following questions:

1. Are there people you can really count on to listen to you when you need to talk? If so, list their names.

2. Are there people you can really talk with frankly, without having to watch what you say? If so, list their names.
3. Are there people you can really count on to be dependable when you need help? If so, list their names.
4. Are there people who really appreciate you as a person? If so, list their names.
5. Are there people you can really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you? If so, list their names.
6. Are there people you can really count on to support you in major decisions you make? If so, list their names.

A social support system satisfies the need for nurturance and attachment, relieves stress, and bolsters perceptions of self-worth, trust, and life direction. A social support system can satisfy the following needs:

Emotional support: This kind of support is useful when we need someone to confide in; when we seek reassurance that we are loved and cared about; when we want someone to lean on.

Tangible support: This kind of support is useful when we need assistance with a job or a chore; when we require aid, a gift, or a loan; when there is a problem we can't handle on our own.

Informational support: This kind of support is useful when we need information or advice; when some feedback will help us with a problem or challenge.

Self-Efficacy and Coping: Self-efficacy refers to our expectations and confidence that the responses we make to life challenges can have a meaningful effect. People with strong feelings of efficacy face life challenges with energy and persistence. They keep trying new alternatives until they succeed or at least survive. Self-efficacy comes from life experiences and from people who serve as significant models. Self-efficacy is built by responding to life challenges with action, flexibility, and persistence.

Kleinke (1991) surveyed the research literature to explore alternatives for increasing self-efficacy. His findings are listed:

1. Live a life of goals. We can't develop self-efficacy unless we succeed at things and we can't succeed if we don't have goals. Make it a practice to have goals and give yourself credit when you achieve them.
2. Set goals with reasonable standards. They should be challenging enough to provide a feeling of satisfaction, but also realistic so we can reach them.

3. Seek out good role models. Role models don't have to be people we personally know. But they should be people who inspire a life attitude of competence and mastery.
4. Talk to yourself in a positive manner. If you are self-conscious about talking to yourself out loud, talk to yourself silently. Take time to "psych yourself up" and to think about good experiences and past successes.
5. Remember that success in reaching goals and overcoming life challenges depends on our willingness to exert sufficient energy and effort. Athletes are well aware of this rule when they say, "Winning depends on how much you want it." (Kleinke 1991, pp. 25–26)

Models of Counseling

The counseling literature cites a broad assortment of theories that can influence the actions of counselors and clients. Hansen, Stevic, and Warner (1982) offer one overview of the wealth of theory that can be applied to counseling relationships. Cornelius J. Holland of the University of Windsor has reported an interesting application of behavioral strategies to counseling parents:

1. Have the parents establish general goals and complaints.
2. Have the parents reduce the general goals and complaints to a list of discrete behaviors which require an increase or decrease in frequency.
3. Have the parents select from the ranked list a single problem behavior on which to concentrate their efforts.
4. Have the parents specify in behavioral terms the precise behavior that is presently occurring and which they desire to change.
5. Have the parents specify in behavioral terms the precise behavior they desire.
6. Have the parents discuss how they may proceed to the terminal behavior in a step-by-step manner.
7. Have the parents list positive and negative reinforcers which they think will be effective in bringing about behavior changes.
8. Have the parents discuss what deprivations are possible.
9. Have the parents clearly establish what they want to do, either to increase or decrease a behavior or to do both.
10. Have the parents discuss the situation in which the desired behavior should occur.
11. Have the parents discuss the situation in which the undesired behavior should not occur.
12. Have the parents determine a situation that increases the likelihood that some form or portion of the desired behavior occurs.

13. Have the parents discuss how they may increase desired behavior by immediately giving a positive reinforcer following the behavior.
14. Have the parents discuss how they may increase desired behavior by immediately terminating a negative reinforcer following the behavior.
15. Have the parents discuss how they may decrease undesired behavior by withholding the reinforcers that follow it.
16. Have the parents discuss how they may decrease undesired behavior by removing a positive reinforcer.
17. Have the parents discuss how they may decrease undesired behavior by time-out.
18. Discuss with the parents how they may pattern the reinforcers they give to the child.
19. Have the parents discuss how they may vary the reinforcers they give to the child.
20. Have the parents discuss how they may apply two more procedures simultaneously.
21. Have the parents rehearse verbally the entire program.

Referral

The typical teacher will not have the skills, or the time and energy, to function as a surrogate counselor with parents. One concern that affects a decision to offer counseling is liability. Teachers are not listed as mental health professionals in the certification or licensure laws of any state, so any claims to expertise as a counselor depend on proper credentials.

Referral for counseling, however, is a service that a teacher can provide, given willingness and recognition of school policies that affect such recommendations. Ehly and Dustin (1989) describe five circumstances in which any professional could consider referral:

1. The professional realizes that he or she is not competent to deal with the problem of concern;
2. The professional is uncertain that s/he has the time or energy to deal with the parent's needs;
3. The professional prefers not to counsel parents;
4. The parent asks for a recommendation for counseling;
5. The professional has initiated counseling, but little progress is occurring.

Teachers seldom have the credentials required in a state to call themselves counselors, and are, thus, not likely to be perceived by regulatory agencies as competent. The parent, however, is often unaware of restrictions imposed by accrediting agencies and institutions, and may seek the

teacher's help through some form of counseling support. Few teachers will be comfortable violating mandates from professional agencies, and will deliberate on how to refer.

Ehly and Dustin (1989) suggest potential procedures for referrals to counseling services:

1. Professionals can consult with a colleague regarding a best course of action. Teachers may know building staff (e.g., teachers, counselors) who are familiar with referral options in the community.
2. When referring the parent to services within the school building, the school counselor or mental health professional responsible for service delivery can discuss procedures or your recommendations;
3. If referring to a community agency, offer choices of services to the parent. Two or three professionals offering counseling can be suggested. If you have information about the professionals or agencies providing services, you can convey your knowledge. Not every author agrees with the decision to list two or more options. Some suggest that providing the name of a single effective professional is sufficient. All writers recommend providing the address and phone numbers of available counselors;

The decision to refer is aided in many communities by existing directories of community health and social service agencies. Such directories may provide extensive details on range of services, fee schedules, and caseloads. Once the referral has been made, Ehly and Dustin note that some teachers want to follow-up to insure that contact has been established with the recommended agency or professional. George and Cristiani (1990) recommend that follow-up should only occur when the teacher has been invited by the parent to discuss events subsequent to referral.

Effective referral of parents to community or school district services allows the teacher to function as a liaison for parents. In the role as liaison, the skills previously discussed in the lesson on consultation will provide the teacher with the tools to guide and support parents.

Self-Study Activity

Consider the relation between the skills required to be an effective counselor and those required to communicate
with parents. Highlight the similarities and differences.

Citations

Carver, C. S., M. F. Scheier, and J. K. Weintraub. 1989. Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56:267–283.

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George, R. L., and T. S. Cristiani. 1990. *Theory, methods, and processes of counseling and psychotherapy.* 3d ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Hansen, J. C., R. R. Stevie, and R. W. Warner, Jr. 1982. *Counseling theory and process*. 3d ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

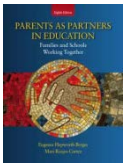
Kleinke, C. L. 1991. *Coping with life challenges*. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Warner, R. W., Jr. 1980. *Individual counseling*. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

LESSON 8 – CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Chapters 7, 8 & 9



Instructor Comments:

Lesson Overview

This lesson will provide an overview of the topic of consultation and will promote the use of consulting strategies with parents.

Discussion

Consultation is a much-touted approach to serving help seekers. The literature on consultation models and practices includes more than 3,000 references since 1970. Writers on services provided by school practitioners have argued that consultation models are ideally suited for the relationships already occurring between adults working in schools. Unfortunately, few articles and books, except in special education, have commented on teachers functioning as consultants; even fewer have considered ways in which teachers can benefit as consumers of consultation services.

Educators—including special education teachers, classroom teachers, school administrators, related services and support personnel, as well as parents—consult, collaborate, and work and team members, according to Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (1993), when they:

- Discuss students' needs.
- Listen to colleagues' concerns about the teaching situation.
- Help identify and define educational problems.
- Facilitate problem solving in the school setting.
- Promote classroom alternatives as first interventions for students with special learning and behavior needs.
- Serve as a medium for student referrals.
- Demonstrate instructional techniques.
- Provide direct assistance to classroom teachers who have students with special learning and behavior needs.
- Lead or participate in staff development activities.
- Assist teachers in designing and implementing behavior-change programs.
- Share materials and ideas with colleagues.

- Participate in team teaching or demonstration teaching.
- Engage in assessment and evaluation activities.
- Serve on curriculum committees, textbook committees, and school advisory councils.
- Follow up on educational issues and concerns with colleagues.

The discussion and attachments that follow consider important aspects of consultation. As a reader, consider what consultation has been able to offer professionals in fields related to teaching, and assess the merits of consultation to support parent-teacher collaboration.

Definition

Consultation involves a process of interaction between two persons—a help giver (consultant) and a help seeker (consultee) who invokes the consultant's help in regard to a current "work" problem. Help on the problem will be decided within the consultant's area of competence.

The definition of consultation is further restricted to interactions in which the consultant accepts no direct responsibility for implementing remedial action with the client. Responsibility for the client remains with the consultee. For example, a parent might approach the teacher to discuss a concern with a child. The parent's concern might not be shared by the teacher; if the teacher chooses to consult with the parent, the responsibility for action resides with the parent.

The consultant engages in the activity not only to help the consultee with the current problem but in order to add to the consultee's knowledge and to lessen areas of misunderstanding, so that in the future the consultee can deal more effectively with the same category of problem.

Consultation may be delivered equally well by internal or external sources (e.g., educators or support staff within the school or professionals based in community settings), depending to some degree on the nature of the problem, the consultee, and the environmental variables. The essence of all forms of consultation is summarized in the following list from Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991):

1. Initiated by either consultee or consultant.
2. Relationship characterized by authentic communication.
3. Consultees may be professionals or nonprofessionals.
4. Provides direct services to consultees, assisting them to develop coping skills that ultimately make them independent of consultant.
5. Is triadic in that it provides indirect services to third parties (clients).

6. Types of problems considered are work related when the concept of work is broadly conceived.
7. Consultant's role varies with consultee's needs.
8. Locus of consultant may be internal or external.
9. All communication between consultant and consultee is confidential.

Special Characteristics for Children and Youth

Promote mental health and educational development

Children as consultees and clients

Goals of Consultation

Change client behavior

Produce change in the consultee

Prompt change in the social organization within which the consultee and client are functioning

Key Elements of Consultation

Interaction is between equals

Focus is on helping consultee do a job

Focus is on current problem

Consultee has decided the s/he wishes help

Consultee has decided that s/he is having difficulty

Consultee keeps responsibility for acting on the problem

Consultee is free to accept or reject the help

The Consultation Contract

As the consultant and help seeker decide to work with each other, the two individuals must establish a contract (formal or informal) that can serve as a guide for the relationship. Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991) review topics often discussed during this early phase of the consulting relationship:

- goals or intended outcomes of consultation
- identity of consultees

- confidentiality of service and the limits of this confidentiality
- time frame—how long will the services be provided to the organization? to the individual consultee?
- times the consultant will be available
- procedure for requesting to work with the consultant
- space for consultant
- how to contact the consultant if needed
- possibility of contract renegotiation if change is needed
- fees, if relevant
- consultant's access to different sources and types of information within the organization
- person to whom the consultant is responsible

Consultant roles

There are many approaches that can be used to deliver consultation to help seekers. The roles available to consultants are varied, and include the choices identified by Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991):

1. Process Observer — Values owned by consultant, but focus is on helping consultee identify key process variables.

2. Process Collaborator — Values owned by consultant and consultee. Focus on process variables. Emphasis on joint problem identification and problem resolution.

3. Content Collaborator — Values owned by consultant and consultee. Focus on content or technology. Emphasis upon joint problem identification and problem resolution.

4. Content/Process Collaborator	Values owned by consultant and consultee. Both process and content viewed as potentially important. Focus on joint problem identification and resolution.
5. Process Expert	Values of consultant dominant. Emphasis upon diagnosing and resolving process problems by consultant.
6. Content Expert	Values of consultant dominant. Emphasis upon diagnosing and resolving the technical problems by the consultant.
7. Content/Process Expert	Values of consultant dominant. Emphasis on diagnosing and resolving processes and content problems by the consultant.

Factors Influencing Effectiveness

Morsink, Thomas, and Correa (1991) have identified personal factors that can influence the effectiveness of professional as they engage in consultation or collaborative roles:

1. The consultant's identity remains the same; that is, his/her own orientation and feelings about life and self cannot be separated out from the consultation process.
2. The consultant needs to adhere to his or her own needs in order to be able to help others; that is, stress management and rejuvenation are vital in order to be able to continue to give to others.
3. The problem belongs to the consultee, not to the consultant; that is, consultants should be facilitators and assist in problem solving, but they should not "own" the problem.

4. The consultant must be willing to let go of feelings about "the way it is supposed to be"; that is, remember the purpose is to help another person to grow and develop skills, rather than to force him or her to follow a certain program or become a "clone."
5. The lack of closure in this process is acceptable; that is, the problems to be resolved will take time and cannot be forced or speeded up.
6. The consultant should not try to carry the burden alone; that is, others in the system should be called upon to share their expertise.
7. The perceptions and expectations of all concerned should be made explicit; that is, persons in helping positions should clarify roles and responsibilities.
8. Alternatives should be offered to the consultee; that is, when a person is willing to try different interventions that have been suggested, the consultant should permit the person to select the one that seems most viable, and then support him or her in attempts to implement.
9. Persons involved should view this as a problem-solving process; that is, the solutions will take time, rather than being immediate answers. Also, a number of problem-solving approaches can be used.
10. A broad skill repertoire is essential; that is, persons in helping roles must be familiar with a variety of strategies and techniques.
11. Success must be considered as a value judgment; that is, all possible outcomes of the helping process—such as changes in the child, system, parent, and other professionals—must be examined rather than make a determination of success or failure based on one indicator.

Obstacles to School Consultation and Collaboration

Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (1993) identify many potential obstacles facing educators as they attempt to consult with help seeker:

Lack of Understanding about Roles

Needed:

- Role clarification
- Role parity

- Appropriate role expectations

Lack of Framework for Consultation and Collaboration

Needed:

- Methods for consultation and collaboration
- Resources (time, facilities, supplies)
- Management (organization, record keeping)

Lack of Assessment and Support of Consultation

Needed:

- Evaluation
- Involvement
- Acceptance

Lack of Preparation for the Roles

Needed:

- Preservice awareness
- Certification and degree programs
- In-service and staff development

How can educators engage in effective consultation? The literature on consultation contains an abundance of information on the steps or stages of consultation. Writing for teachers and school support professionals, Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck (1993) suggest the following ten-step process for consultation:

1. **Plan prior to the consultation.**
    1.1 Focus upon major topic or area of concern.
    1.2 Prepare and organize materials.
    1.3 Prepare several possible actions or strategies.
    1.4 Arrange for a comfortable, convenient meeting place.

2. **Initiate the consultation.**

    2.1 Establish rapport.

    2.2 Identify the agenda.

    2.3 Focus on the tentatively defined concern.

    2.4 Express interest in the needs of all.

3. **Collect information.**

    3.1 Make notes of data, soliciting it from all.

    3.2 Combine and summarize the data.

    3.3 Assess data to focus on areas needing more information.

    3.4 Summarize the information.

4. **Identify the problem.**

    4.1 Encourage all to listen to each concern.

    4.2 Identify issues, avoiding jargon.

    4.3 Encourage ventilation of frustrations and concerns.

    4.4 Keep focusing on the pertinent issues and needs.

    4.5 Check for agreement.

5. **Generate options and alternatives.**

    5.1 Engage in collaborative problem solving.

    5.2 Generate several possible options.

    5.3 Suggest examples of appropriate classroom modifications.

    5.4 Review options, discussing consequences of each.

    5.5 Select the most reasonable alternatives.

6. **Formulate a plan.**

    6.1 Designate those who will be involved, and how.

    6.2 Set goals.

    6.3 Establish responsibilities.

6.4 Generate evaluation criteria and methods.

6.5 Agree on a date for reviewing progress.

7. Evaluate progress and process.

7.1 Conduct a review session at a specified time.

7.2 Review data and analyze the results.

7.3 Keep products as evidence of progress.

7.4 Make positive, supportive comments.

7.5 Assess contribution of the collaboration.

8. Follow up on the situation.

8.1 Reassess periodically to assure maintenance.

8.2 Provide positive reinforcement.

8.3 Plan further action or continue the plan.

8.4 Adjust the plan if there are problems.

8.5 Initiate further consultation if needed.

8.6 Bring closure if goals have been met.

9. Interact informally with the consultee when possible.

9.1 Support effort and reinforce results.

9.2 Share information where it is wanted.

9.3 Enjoy the communication.

10. Repeat consultation as appropriate.

Morsink, Thomas, and Correa (1991), writing on special education teachers engaged in consultation, proposed the following process for professional action:

1. Establishing the relationship: meeting and establishing trust with the consultee.
2. Gathering information: checking a variety of sources to get background on the problem.
3. Identifying the problem: determining the history and frequency of the problem, defining it in measurable terms.
4. Stating the target behavior: Considering whether the behavior needs to be increased or decreased, and to be judged by what criteria.
5. Generating interventions: Discussing options to consider, selecting ones to try.
6. Implementing the interventions: putting the interventions into effect and collecting data on their success or failure.
7. Evaluating the interventions: determining whether the desired outcomes have been reached and modifying as necessary.
8. Withdrawing from the consultative relationship: ending the process when the goal has been reached or an agreement is made not to continue.

Consultants approach help seekers with little information on the needs and preferences of help seekers (consultees). Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991) have developed the following format that contains recommendations on identifying needs/preferences:

Consultant Technique	**Message to Consultee**
Model expected behavior by sharing one's own expectations and preferences.	I've shared my attitudes with you, now tell me yours.
Direct questions such as "What do you expect from a consultant?", or use of questionnaire.	I'm interested in your input regarding my functioning.
Relay stories of failed consultations due to misperceptions of consultee.	It is important that we agree.
Informal contracting: "Let's agree on what our roles will be."	Commitment to models of functioning is important to our success.

In order to make an accurate assessment of the nature of the consultees' perceptions of the child's difficulty and the factors that may be contributing to the problem, the consultant needs to be able to get answers to the following questions, according to Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991).

Modeling Influences

1. What types of behaviors are modeled and reinforced in the home that may contribute to the child's problem?
2. Are there outside influences such as grandparents that influence the child's behavior? What is the nature of these influences?

Family Functioning

1. Is the child given the opportunity to perform significant tasks in the home and is his or her accomplishments recognized in the form of positive feedback?
2. Are siblings treated differently? Is one favored over another? Why? (Objectivity?)
3. Are the subsystems in the family well differentiated? Do children assume parental roles, or conversely, do parents assume children's roles?

Communication

1. What type of expectations do the parents hold for the child? Are these communicated clearly and consistently?
2. Generally speaking, is communication clear in the family? Is it affirming?
3. Are children given the opportunity to express their individuality?

Importance of Problem

1. Do the parents see the child's problem as significant?
2. Do they "own" the problem or blame it on others or circumstances beyond their control?
3. Is "good parenting" important to the parents or do they have low standards of functioning as parents?
4. Do the parents believe that they can make an impact on the child?

As the consultant and help seeker zero in on the concerns that will be addressed, the consultant can guide discussion to identify clearly the scope of the problem. In the consultation literature, reference is made to "problem identification" or discussion that is intended to assist the two parties

to consider all information that might be relevant to the development of an intervention plan. Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991) offer the following tips for problem identification:

The consultant and consultee should agree

1. To take stock of the situation together either as a review or refinement task.
2. That the consultation should evaluate the quality of the information provided by the consultee.
3. That the consultant needs to consider the expectations the consultee holds for the consultant.
4. That the consultant and consultee should collaboratively collect data in a systematic manner.
5. To conduct a process analysis of the problem. (Do contributing variables, identified problems, and problematic outcomes relate logically?)
6. To identify a (or several) competing hypothesis.
7. To consider the constraints affecting a problem solution.

Cultural influences on collaboration and consultation

The following materials, offered by Morsink, Thomas, and Correa (1991), delineate the critical needs for cultural awareness and sensitivity when working in collaborative and consulting relationships.

- It is important for special service professionals to learn how to accept cultural diversity and to understand its dimensions.
- It is important for special service professionals to learn how to accept linguistic diversity and to understand its dimensions.
- Although the benefits of understanding cultural and linguistic diversity are the improvement of educational and related services programs for all students, the consequences of a lack of this understanding are erroneous labeling of students as handicapped and their misplacement in special education programs.
- It is important to be realistic. Schools are societal institutions designed to transmit the culture of the dominant society. Integration may be difficult if the dominant society views the culturally different person as inferior or undesirable.

- It is equally as important to be realistic about the difficulties of domesticated organizations in encouraging innovations and of defining common goals. Public programs are domesticated organizations, and the interactive team is one that seeks innovation based on the establishment of common goals.
- Effective educational services for ethnic minority students and their families require more than just an understanding of cultural values, beliefs, and customs. Action and implementation must follow sensitization to cultural differences. Collaboration with families and professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds can be an enriching experience for all involved.

Examples of questions assisting assessment during consultation, offered by Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991):

Client Characteristics

- What client behaviors are of concern?
- How are client cognitions contributing to the problem?
- If the client is a child, are there developmental issues that must be considered?
- How does the client perceive the consultee?

Consultee Characteristics

- Is the problem one of lack of knowledge, skill, objectivity and/or confidence?
- How does the consultee view the problem?
- What are the consultee's expectations for self and client?
- What intervention skills does the consultee possess?
- What types of treatment are acceptable to the consultee?

Environmental Characteristics: Immediate Environment

- What aspects of the environment are reinforcing or maintaining the client's behavior?
- What resources are available that could be used in resolving the problem?
- What constraints in the immediate environment must be considered?

Environmental Characteristics: Larger Environment

- Are there structural aspects of the environment that are contributing to the problem?
- Are there factors outside of the immediate environment that are affecting client behavior?
- Are the changes proposed for the client or consultee consistent with organizational norms and expectations?

Finally, Brown, Pryzwansky, and Schulte (1991) offer suggestions for conducting family consultation sessions. Their remarks are divided according to the theoretical models or preferences that influence practitioners:

Social Learning Theory (Bandura)

1. Most behavior is acquired as a result of imitation of esteemed models. Since in most families parents are esteemed models, the origin of much childhood behavior is imitation of the parent or, in the case of the younger children, older siblings. When parents are either absent or not held in high esteem as models, other individuals will be imitated.
2. Cognition mediates the process of behavior acquisition. Cognitions regarding one's confidence that one can perform a task (self-efficacy), the importance attached to a task (appraisal), the outcomes associated with performing a task (expectations), and the standards one has developed with regard to performing a task are of major importance. Effective parents are confident, see child rearing as important, believe that they can make a difference, and want to do an outstanding job.
3. Self-efficacy can best be heightened by performance accomplishments. Vicarious modeling and verbal persuasion are also effective means of improving self-efficacy. Whenever anxiety is a barrier to performance, reducing that anxiety can improve self-efficacy by engaging parents in proximal goal setting and involvement in activities that are deemed important (appraisal) and achievable (expectation), self-efficacy regarding parenting can be improved.
4. Standards of functioning as a parent are probably acquired as a result of direct observation of one's own parents and observation of others. In consultation, vicarious modeling, verbal persuasion, and parental standards of functioning (e.g., how well they want to parent) are the mechanisms available for changing the standards of parents.

Mental Health Consultation (Caplan*)*

1. Consultee problems can be classified as lack of knowledge, lack of skill, lack of confidence, and lack of objectivity. In this context, lack of objectivity refers to biases that are acquired either as a result of learning prior to the birth of a child (e.g., retarded children are to be shunned) or as a result of anxiety-laden experiences after the child is born (e.g., serious illness where child nearly dies).
2. The problems of knowledge, skill, self-confidence, and objectivity are often interrelated.

Systems Theory (Bateson, Capra)

1. The nuclear family is a part of a broader suprasystem called the extended family. Many of the values of the nuclear family are based upon those of the suprasystem. These values, whether they are positive or negative, guide the parenting process.
2. The family interacts as a system. Healthy families are interdependent, but differentiated to the degree that individuals can have distinct identities; develop subsystems (e.g., parents and children); develop distinct mechanisms for regulating the behavior of their members based upon principles of supportive, open communication; and have their own values and goals.
3. Cause-and-effect is virtually impossible to ascertain in the family system. Therefore, blaming should be avoided.

Citations

Bergan, J. R. and T. R. Kratochwill. 1990. *Behavioral consultation and therapy*. New York: Plenum.

Brown, D., W. B. Pryzwansky, and A. C. Schulte. 1991. *Psychological consultation.* 2d ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Caplan, G. 1970. *The theory and practice of mental health consultation*. New York: Basic Books.

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Kratochwill, T. R., and J. R. Bergan. 1990. *Behavioral consultation in applied settings: An individual guide*. New York: Plenum.

Morsink, C. V., C. C. Thomas, and V. I. Correa. 1991. *Interactive teaming: Consultation and collaboration in special programs*. New York: Merrill.

Are you ready to take EXAM 2?

From the list below, check the readings and written assignments you have already completed and/or submitted to your instructor.

☐ **Reading Assignments:** Berger and Riojas-Cortez

- Lesson 5 – Chapter 6
- Lesson 6 – Read Chapter 7 and Review pp. 126-128
- Lesson 7 – no reading assignment from text
- Lesson 8 – Chapters 7, 8 and 9

☐ **Written Assignments**

- Completed and submitted Written Assignments 3 and 4.

If you checked all the items listed above, **GO ahead and schedule your exam.** Additional information about your exam and the registration process is provided on the following page.

If you did NOT check one (or more) of the items listed above, complete the readings/assignments you are missing, THEN register for Exam 2.

EXAM 2

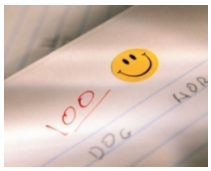
A supervised, **90 minute** examination follows Lesson 8. **Written Assignments 3 and 4 must be completed before the exam may be taken.**

Exam 2 will cover Lessons 5 through 8. The maximum time limit for the exam is ninety minutes, although you may not need that much time. The exam will consist of essay questions, divided into three areas. In each area, there will be two choices—you will answer one choice per area, for a total of three responses.

In your preparations for the exam, pay close attention to both the assigned readings in the text and the study guide. Exam 2 will emphasize your understanding of important options for work between parents and teachers. A good "rule of thumb" to the areas covered in the exam is to consider section headings. Thus, for Exam 2, primary themes included an overview of parent conferences, parent education, and the options of counseling and consultation. Although you are not required to refer to materials covered in Lessons 1–4, please feel free to draw, as you see appropriate, such materials into your answers on Exam 2.

The exam is closed book and closed notes; the use of a computer or other tool is not allowed. ***Good luck!***

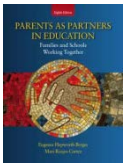
Information regarding **exam registration**, scheduling, and policies is posted on the **course homepage** (ICON). **On campus students** taking exams at the Continuing Education Testing Center should register for their exam at least **two business days** before their intended examination day. **Off campus students** will take exams using an online proctored exam service.



I will post your **exam grades** to ICON within one week after I receive the exam from the Division of Continuing Education. **Exams cannot be returned**, but if you are in the area and would like to inspect your graded exam, please e-mail me to make an appointment.

LESSON 9 – DIVERSITY IN FAMILY NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

READING ASSIGNMENT:



- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Read Chapters 3, 10, and 11. Review Chapter 2.

Instructor Comments:

Lesson Overview

This lesson will provide an overview of the topic of diversity and will introduce the topic of diversity in parents. The lesson will emphasize working with families in distress and working with families of children in special education.

Discussion

Concern about at-risk children has reached historic highs among professional educators, a reflection of society's concern for the long-term implications of exposing children to disruptive and harmful influences in home and community environments. The current literature in education and mental health, as well as general articles found in magazines and newspapers, offers anecdotal and case study evidence of the problems schools experience in working with students who are poorly prepared for the emotional and academic challenges of the classroom. What options do parents, educators, and the community have in preventing or remediating the negative influences that place a child at-risk? This lesson will attempt to address the research literature bearing on this question, while considering the implications of the evidence for parents, schools, and educators.

The discussion will follow a format that considers historical as well as research evidence on the conditions of society that affect children's lives. After reviewing the recent past, I'll examine the current level of information on children's development, highlighting the critical elements of growth and development that must be nurtured if children are to mature into productive adults. Prevention and intervention programs will be discussed, especially those exemplary programs featured in the national press. Finally, generalizations from the review of evidence will be examined in light of the needs of children and educators in the United States.

History of Concern for At-Risk Children

Current conditions within American society are a reflection of forces in motion for decades, if not centuries. Wallerstein, to be considered later on in this lesson, in discussing the impact of divorce, has argued that the concept of individualism and its realization through challenging and uprooting major values within society can be traced to writers from hundreds of years ago. The impact of

individualism as a philosophy has shaped liberal and conservative agendas for change to a degree that would seem quite foreign to an observer from the seventeenth century. That observer would marvel, on the other hand, at the generally favorable conditions for life in the 1990's and be astounded at the support provided by government and charity for all citizens.

Aries (1962), among modern writers, was an early pioneer in uncovering the conditions of previous societies and discussing their impact on children. Working with methods of historical analysis that he developed, Aries argued the following:

1. No concept of childhood existed before the seventeenth century. Children essentially had no status in society and were regarded as little more than animals;
2. Relationships between parent and child were formal, with little expressed affection toward the offspring;
3. Children were often brutally exploited, as recently as the early 19th century, in most societies.

Pollock (1983) has noted, however, that if Aries' evidence is accurate and conclusions valid, children today are quite well off compared to their ancestors. Pollock and several other authors have challenged many of the analyses offered by Aries, while recognizing that Aries was limited by the evidence available at the time he wrote. More recent documentation of conditions faced by children in other centuries offers a less grim picture of conditions in family life and in society.

Conditions of care of children have improved over the last few centuries. During the early part of the 19th century, schools began to demand more obedience and conformity from their students (Pollock 1983). Parents became more and more concerned about the socialization of their children and pressured schools to provide a curriculum that extended beyond the contents of a classical education.

By the late 1900's, the American family was perceived to be in danger of extinction as a haven of stability (Demos 1986). The broader society was changing rapidly, especially since the Civil War. Industrialization of the economy and the exodus of large numbers of laborers to the cities offered challenges to the resources within urban areas. No city at the time offered what would today be considered a bare minimum of support to families in need of food, clothing, or shelter. Instead, the efforts of religious and volunteer associations were responsible for the development of the precursors of social services found today in American cities (Mintz and Kellogg 1988).

Conditions affecting urban families (on which we have more evidence that rural families) were often grim. Mintz and Kellogg (1988) present a portrait of a typical family whose father/husband was employed in a Pennsylvania steel mill around the year 1900. The steel industry only employed males, and few women could find any employment in the community. Steel company policies controlled the lives of families, from working conditions, to services offered to families, to daily routines and living standards. The six-day workweek contained a minimum of 63 hours. Most of the workers earned under $15 a week, a level that local charities considered a subsistence wage. Half of the workers earned under $1.65 a day.

One recent analysis of how earnings were spent by a typical family in this Pennsylvania community uncovered the grand sum of forty-one cents left in the family budget each month to cover health care, furniture, education, recreation, church contributions, and savings. Families, whenever possible, took in laundry and boarders and encouraged older sons to earn money to supplement the family income.

Up until World War I, working class Americans similar to the steelworkers described above made up the majority of the American population (Mintz and Kellogg 1988). Conditions in American cities were considered atrocious by observers at the time, who were exposed to conditions of poverty and want seldom encountered in the United States today. Riis (1890) documented the impact of poverty in his day, and was soon joined by many other voices in protesting the basic lack of care available for children and families. Vulnerability to the conditions in the environment was a fact of life in almost every family. Health care plans and insurance programs did not exist. The government did not offer support to families with young children, a particularly vulnerable period for most families, nor to the elderly as they faced their final years.

Conceptions of the Family

The ways in which families expressed their aspirations for children and marriage have changed over the past century. Conditions in schooling and employment have evolved so that greater opportunities exist across society than in earlier times (Cremin 1988). Concepts of marriage and childrearing have changed as well, although such changes appear, from an historical sense, to follow cycles rather than major shifts. A good example is birth rate. Actual birthrates will vary over the years, but concern for the birthrates of segments of society has produced periodic calls for action (e.g., restrictions on immigration, sterilization of the poor) by nativists in the United States. Concern for divorce rates has surfaced on occasion, especially in the period from 1889 to 1906 during which the United States was found to have the highest divorce rate in the world (Demos 1986).

Important shifts in the status quo began a century ago through the activism of women, pursuing well-organized efforts to achieve suffrage, to purify society by eliminating prostitution and sexual diseases, and to offer support to families in poverty (Evans 1989). Patriarchal authority, so prevalent for hundreds of years, began to erode in many areas, with important reversals of tradition appearing in the courts. A good example of a basic change in attitudes occurred around the practice of custody following divorce. In contrast to a century earlier (in which children and property were considered to belong to the adult male), courts began to assign custody to the mother, arguing better care was assured under the new arrangement (Phillips 1988).

As ideas changed about physical health (and governments did a better job of eliminating disease within general living conditions), concepts of mental health and childrearing evolved, influenced by the findings of science. Optimism that science offered a cure for all of society's ills was expressed by many in the professions (which, similarly, were evolving into modern-day forms). The modern era thus began with a rejection of much of the fatalism common in previous periods of history. Challenges remained for the family structure, but expectations for ultimate satisfaction within the family equally were present (Demos 1986).

The settlement house movement offered a wealth of services to families living in poverty. Skills in childcare and personal hygiene were taught, as were the values of middle class society. The houses struggled with the dilemma of how to provide financial support to the needy without destroying their incentive to work (Husock 1990).

Societies arose in many communities to shelter and nourish abandoned and orphaned children. "Street children" were a common sight in many cities, attracting wide concern for their activities as well as their ultimate place in society. Concern for children led to action directed at conditions in tenements and factories, where child labor was common until twentieth century activists supported legislation to eliminate such practices.

Changes in Schooling

Cremin (1988) has described changes in schools in response to wider shifts in American society. The early twentieth century urban school was part of a political machine that controlled most services. Rural districts, in contrast, experienced more local control at the expense of attendance—schooling was a seasonal endeavor. Reformers targeted conditions in the schools, urging that professionals skilled in the processes of education assume control. Nonpartisan school boards were an early priority of activists.

Along with challenges to the politics of education came a concerted effort to synthesize available information on child development/psychology with methods of instruction. Schools developed into vehicles for educating the majority of children through the eighth grade (prior to World War II) and through the twelfth grade (1950's and beyond).

The federal government became involved extensively with education after World War II, developing federal agencies that supported the progressive movement in school reform. Enrollments rose in grades from kindergarten to twelve, while available curricula diversified to meet the assumed needs of students and their families. Awareness of post-secondary training and education influenced available services in high schools; vocational education expanded to meet the demands of business and industry. Central to all such changes was an awareness of what parents and the community wanted. Especially after the Second World War, schools recognized that students must be attracted to the services offered by the schools if they were to complete their formal education.

The means and methods of scientific testing of intelligence and achievement increased significantly after World War I. Educators began to use assessment data that provided individual and group information on children. Implications for the use of assessment procedures were not always benign, given that many students were placed into educational tracks on the basis of their abilities, racial or ethnic identity, and socioeconomic status. Only recently have court decisions struck down many of these practices, now considered discriminatory (Cremin 1988).

The contents of education were influenced as well by the influx of foreign-born children into American schools. Adjustments to the needs of these children produced, especially in urban areas, new forms of support services offered by and through the school. Whether such services proved adequate was (and continues to be) challenged by advocates for immigrant groups.

With all these changes occurring in schools, parents were still considered the most important agents in a child's education. In contrast to earlier times when the church reinforced the priority of parents and schools offered no competition, the twentieth century has seen a steady elaboration of services in response to family needs and preferences. This elaboration has not been value-free, but instead has promoted values consistent with middle class mores. The support that science and the various professions have provided to middle class mores restricts consideration of other, potentially viable avenues to helping families. The federal government reinforces such values by attaching priorities to research funding, priorities that reflect dominant political philosophies and the consensus of the electorate.

As Bahr (1988) has stated, "the popular wisdom, buttressed by media commentators, politicians, clergy, and other well-informed people," is that we live in an era of family decline, when the forces of godlessness or of technology gone berserk, or both, have weakened the fundamental building block of our civilization—the family—weakened it to the point that its very survival is in question." The problem with this assessment is two-fold: no historic evidence confirms that we differ significantly from our ancestors in the total amount of risk to the family offered by environmental and social conditions; we remain committed in the education and mental health professions to the family as the focus around which we plan and deliver services.

Schools have not evolved as far as reformers such as Dewey urged. The structure of schools and the content of instruction have not changed dramatically since the 1920's, although available technology supports the potential for many revisions in educational practices (Cremin 1988). And while Dewey urged schools to join the forces of reform in helping children and their families deal with the pressures of society, few observers would argue that schools have extended their influence much farther than their immediate custodial and instructional roles. Thus, while families remain under pressure from the demands of their environment, schools have directed few of their resources towards efforts to ameliorate conditions within the broader society that impinge on children's growth and development. Should schools re-consider policies and practices that see the child rather than the family as the focus of interventions? Our discussion of the at-risk concept will provide information relevant in shaping any response to this question.

Overview of the At-Risk Concept

In perhaps the best collection of research studies on at-risk students, Slavin, Karweit, and Madden (1989) recognize the inexact dimensions of the at-risk label. Essentially, 'at-risk' is whatever you define it to be. The broadest use of the term, at least in relation to students, denotes factors that restrict opportunities for completing an education, placing a student at-risk of dropping out of school. The State of Texas published a recent directory providing details on many programs directed at retaining students in school until graduation (Texas Education Agency 1988). Many educators would support a definition of at-risk that focused attention on interventions helping students master the academic skills needed to assume adult responsibilities. Excellent research exists on students who drop out, and many schools have succeeded in developing programs that will keep potential dropouts in school (Rumberger and 1987; Bryk and Thum 1989; Stage 1989).

One difficulty with restricting a definition of risk to school completion issues is that it masks potent factors that influence children's growth and development. Children can be at risk, for example, of

debilitation and death because of genetic and health disorders. A child can "fail to thrive" for any of a number of factors, most of which are poorly understood. Poverty can have a pervasive influence on a child's developing central nervous system, and eventual capabilities to cope with demands of the community and school.

Many other risk factors could be proposed as relevant influences on children's opportunities to succeed in society. Should or can the schools deal with all such potential influences on children's growth and development? In a very real sense, schools are already confronted with the products of those influences. Problems seen among students within a school setting are addressed using existing service delivery mechanisms, most notably special education support services. Yet many support services restrict, through definitional criteria, access to service, so that small numbers of children are provided with remedial interventions.

Slavin, Karweit, and Madden (1989) recognize that schools are committed to helping all children, regardless of background. Our society voices a strong commitment to healthy development of children and the eventual production of adult citizens. In our current political climate, services to children have been assigned high priority. High levels of attention targeting at-risk children do not translate directly into programs that can address their needs. Complicating the decision-making process on how to proceed in assisting at-risk children is a dilemma that would have seemed quite familiar a century ago: balancing the financial costs of service to children with the social-emotional consequences of assuming responsibility for what have been traditional family responsibilities.

Developmental Tasks Facing Children and Families

To develop priorities for school services to children and their parents, educators first must understand how children develop, how parent-child relationships evolve, and how schools best can support the child and family.

Early Childhood Issues

Bigner (1989) offers an important perspective influencing any discussion concerning children. In a review of parent-child relationships, Bigner defines core activities that shape the child's view of the world and determine his or her place in it. By understanding the child and the process of development, educators can form reasonable expectations for each child's progress through the cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral challenges of schooling.

The early childhood period has attracted wide attention of late, with many observers alarmed with the impact of maternal behavior on the developing fetus. For example, the term "crack babies" is

frequently discussed in newspapers and magazines. Medical science has discovered critical period during fetal development that can produce, under adverse circumstances such as ingestion of drugs, long-term problems for the child. Alarm about health-related factors affecting developing fetuses and infants has produced increased levels of funding to investigate the early development period.

Bigner outlines the most important developmental tasks of early childhood:

1. Learning sex differences
2. Forming conceptions of social and physical reality
3. Learning to relate to parents, siblings, and others
4. Learning to communicate
5. Developing concepts of right and wrong.

Many philosophers, educators, and psychologists have written on critical elements relating to each task. Theories have evolved to describe the means by which learning occurs within areas of development.

As the child matures during the early years, s/he develops a sense of belonging to a family or surrogate lesson, learns to express and control feelings, discovers personal capabilities, establishes routines, develops a sense of responsibility for personal actions, and learns how to interact appropriately with others (Bigner 1989). All activities occur under the scrutiny of the family (or its surrogate), that experiences stresses or challenges to its financial, psychological, and physical capacities (McCubbin and Figley 1983).

The family confronts the following tasks:

1. maintaining adequate space and materials for the family
2. meeting all financial costs of raising young children
3. spreading responsibility across members
4. maintaining satisfying relationships between adult family members
5. ensuring effective communication within the family
6. nurturing relationships with extended family members
7. tapping resources in the community that would enhance family life
8. facing dilemmas and reflecting on one's approach to life
   (Bigner 1989)

When the family has difficulty coping with any of these tasks, strain on the family can be severe. Authors in the family stress literature recognize that the same event or set of circumstances can be perceived differently by two families—perspective on the stressor may be as important as characteristics of the stressor (McCubbin and Figley 1983). Families will vary as well in their capacity to ride through difficult periods.

Educators viewing Bigner's lists will realize that schools, as presently structured, can offer important services to meet the needs of developing children, but do little in the areas considered under family needs. Some observers would argue that families could organize to demand needed support from the schools or the broader community (Biklen 1983), but others would argue that we have few options currently in place to offer concerted, coordinated interventions that would involve school and community agencies supporting family functioning (Sarason 1988).

Middle Childhood

The tasks of middle childhood offer challenges not only to the child but to parents and educators who work to support healthy development. Bigner (1989) identifies the following as central to this stage:

1. developing physical skills needed to play
2. acquiring a realistic and healthy attitude toward the self
3. developing social skills to relate with peers
4. acquiring a masculine or feminine social role
5. becoming proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic
6. learning how to deal with the demands of daily living
7. acquiring values and a sense of conscience
8. learning how to be personally independent
9. developing awareness of social groups and institutions.

A critical aspect of middle childhood is the development of patterns of interaction with age-mates. Such patterns will form, in large part, the basis of later strategies for relating to the adult world. School tasks center on attaining an understanding of conservation of mass, volume, and related conceptions and an awareness of reversibility.

The family with children at this stage of development faces similar challenges. The essential tasks of maintenance (financial, physical, psychological) are present in new forms. Parents' privacy can be affected. Cooperation in the tasks of running the household takes on new meaning. Communication

among family members demands more elaborate skills. The family faces an ongoing examination on how best to tap the resources of the community, peer group, and extended family, the goal being to expose family members (especially children) to the diversity and richness of modern life.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood

The period of adolescence has been considered a time of stress, for parent and adolescent. Current research (see, for example, Ianni 1989) challenges many of our assumptions relating to the changes experienced by the developing adolescent. Change, to many observers (including parents), seems to be the key descriptor of the period, as adolescents explore new ideas and behaviors.

Complicating possibilities for genuine change is the realization by adolescent and parent that independence is not far off. Uncertainty about the future may fuel some of the experimentation that is reflected in the adolescent's actions.

The developmental tasks for the adolescent are centered around the themes of development for the immediate future:

1. Refining relations with age-mates, male and female
2. Expressing a masculine or feminine social role
3. Adjusting to the limits of one's body and learning to care for it
4. Expressing emotional independence from parents and other adults
5. Working towards financial independence
6. Preparing for an occupation
7. Preparing for adult life, marriage, and family responsibilities
8. Becoming more aware of one's place in the broader society
9. Working to be more socially responsible
10. Refining values and personal ethics as a guide to behavior (Bigner 1989)

Each element of the critical developmental tasks rests on the accomplishments achieved during earlier stages. The central focus for many adolescents is identifying a direction for future employment. Schools and family members can aid the student with information and services to direct the student to appropriate services.

The adolescent's family in most cases will continue as an important resource to the young adult. As the adolescent develops a perspective on future options, he or she will observe the family as a model, a point of reference, or a loosely defined standard of what to avoid. With exposure to family

members stretching out for 15 or more years, parents and siblings of adolescents are potent influences on the course of development.

Once adulthood is reached, the tasks of the individual center around developing and maintaining economic independence, selecting a mate or living partner, and operating a household. McCubbin and Figley (1983) point out the vast majority of Americans (over 90 percent) marry at least once in their lifetime; the majority of these individuals (again over 90 percent) will bear one or more children (assuming biological capability). Marriage and child rearing appear to be highly valued in our society, as has been true in most earlier societies. Sweet and Bumpass (1987) point out, however, that some recent cohorts of young adults have expressed preferences for a marriage- and childfree future. Given that young adults have been known to change their minds and behaviors, it is too early to tell if a basic shift is underway in the perceived value of marriage and children.

In sum, tasks facing children from infancy through young adulthood can be identified from the research literature. Families play a central role in supporting development. Schools and community agencies (religious or public) can supplement the family, but currently do so in limited and often uncoordinated ways. Knowledge of the range within which normal development can be expected to proceed helps educators interpret the abilities and behaviors of children considered at risk. Educators require a basis upon which to assess development that is impaired or delayed.

Educational Programs Targeting Risk Factors

As noted above, schools often consider the risk of dropping out of school as a major emphasis for intervention programs. Services targeted at prevention can take three major forms:

1. Primary prevention, in which large numbers of students are exposed to information on and discussion of issues relevant to growth and development. A school, for example, might provide training on self-esteem and encourage children to think and act as individuals;
2. Secondary prevention, in which students exposed to significant levels of stress or disruption are offered guidance and skill training to help them avoid future problems. A school might offer special counseling for younger siblings of drug offenders in the hope that the children do not develop drug-related problems;
3. Tertiary prevention, in which known offenders or students already exhibiting behaviors denoting high risk are offered support (educational, mental health, medical) to assist return to more normalized patterns of behavior. For example, a school or community agency might operate a follow-through program for adolescent drug offenders upon their return to the

community. All levels of prevention can be offered in a community, even within a single agency (Auerbach and Stolberg 1986).

Dropout programs can be found at all three levels of prevention. Weis, Farrar, and Petrie 1989) provide a useful resource describing programs targeted at low income females, students in rural America, and inner city youth, as well as consideration of issues central to an informed discussion of options. Wehlage (1989) asks a question of critical importance as schools explore possibilities for intervention: Can schools be expected to prevent dropping out? While the author offers an affirmative answer, historical analysis bears scrutiny. Only during the present century have large percentages of students completed basic education (K-12); recognition of this fact has led to the development of curricular materials aimed at attracting and maintaining students. The national dropout rate of 25 percent may reflect the limitations of current practices in American education.

Cicchelli, Baecher, and Baratta (1990) reported on efforts within the New York City schools to lower dropout rates. Strategies have been directed at absenteeism, achievement in reading and math, adequacy of childcare (neglect and deprivation in the home environment), and self-esteem. After a three-year review of efforts, the authors found much that worked. Social service case managers responsible for coordination of services to individual students and their families monitored attendance. In-person and telephone contacts between the case manager and the student proved effective in supporting school attendance.

Tutoring activities supplemented the regular school curriculum. Students, under ideal conditions, received individual tutoring 40 minutes per week. Contracts were established to channel the efforts of the student and tutor to satisfy priorities of the classroom teacher and support staff.

Among the many other services offered by the program, families with at-risk children were taught strategies and skills to solve problems. Parental involvement in all facets of the school programs was a priority.

One key to the success of the program was collaboration among participating schools and Fordham University, which sponsored the initial effort. Other universities have become active in similar projects, but the authors point out that the essential ingredient of success was collaboration in service delivery that extended beyond the administrative boundaries of a school district. This finding is echoed in many other recent studies (Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989). The study supports several other conclusions within the literature on services to at-risk children:

1. The quality of programs matters more than the quantity of services
2. Early intervention is to be preferred to waiting until more extensive problems erupt

3. Intensive instruction, whether as a part of a traditional classroom or cooperative learning effort, must address the needs of individual students
4. Effective preschool programs for children from families living in poverty contribute to their development
5. Remedial and special education programs lose a portion of their impact when poorly coordinated with other services offered to target children
6. Effective teaching of at-risk students does not differ from effective teaching directed at students in the general program (Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989).

An interesting perspective offered in the current literature on prevention programs for dropouts suggests that current efforts to attract and maintain students may be failing to address the best predictor of personal behavior: intrinsic motivation. The efforts of Csikszentmihalyi (1990a; 1990b) and his followers have demonstrated—across societies, social classes, and the characteristics of work—that intrinsic motivation is essential before an individual will pursue an activity over the long term. Unfortunately, the author notes that schools, and the process of formal education, are built on a system of external controls, competition, and evaluation. When schools address student motivation, the emphasis is on introducing or exposing students to external rewards. The lesson derived from Csikszentmihalyi's research is that our efforts might be better directed at helping children become more aware of the fun inherent to many educational tasks, helping them experience, for example, the pleasures of reading in order to see for themselves the application of school learning to mastering the challenges of life in the community.
Resnick (1990) echoes these themes, arguing that many school practices are so "mismatched to the ways in which practical, informational, and pleasurable literacy activities take place in everyday life that it seems highly unlikely that schools alone are responsible for the levels of literacy practice we observe in society." [p. 182] She urges schools and communities to offer apprenticeships to students, experiences that will expose them to the "real world" demands for application of the skills contained within the school's curriculum. Citizens from business, industry, educational and mental health agencies, and government can participate in promoting the values of education.

The Impact of Family Life on School Performance

The literature on the family's influence on children's thoughts and actions is extensive. In this section, we will review portions of the literature relevant to children's behavior in school.

Children who grow up in impoverished environments, whether the result of physical, psychological, or financial problems affecting family structure and process, are affected by their experiences. A

recent Phi Delta Kappa report documents the profound effects that poverty has on a child's abilities to benefit from traditional school programs (Reed and Sautter 1990). Many authors now challenge the assumptions around which intervention programs for such children were structured in the past. Knapp and Shields (1990), for example, emphasize linking reading, writing, and oral expression in school programs. They make a broader point that bears noting. Research on children of poverty and other risk groups will produce ongoing evidence of what will be considered "best practice." Unfortunately, what could be considered a fine practice with an inner city Hispanic youth, for example, might not generalize to a rural African-American; generalizations based on the research literature may result in a community adopting intervention practices that are not well suited to target populations.

Knapp and Shields (1990) argue that only "through a combination of careful documentation, demonstration, natural variation studies, and experimental investigations will researchers, in collaboration with practitioners, be able to extend our understanding of what is possible in working with the children of poverty." (p. 757) Their argument echoes the consensus of writers dealing with other risk factors. Much work in research and application remains to be completed.

Two final comments on interventions relating to economic difficulties in the family involve homelessness and job seeking. Many cities have a major problem providing adequate services to homeless adults and children. Some districts have begun to target homeless children, offering a wide array of services in the hope of meeting basic dietary, clothing, and housing needs, in addition to keeping educational progress on track. Gonzalez (1990) provides an example of one successful program in Dallas.

Large numbers of families in urban and rural settings face unemployment and underemployment. Schools have recognized that "at-risk" children can be aided substantially by helping adults in the family seek and maintain employment. Brian and Knighton (1988), Kurzman (1988), and Vigilante (1988) offer excellent overviews of issues at the heart of the impact of employment (and its lack) on families.

Families in Transition

You are probably aware of statistics on family separation, divorce, and re-marriage. Thousands of studies and articles have appeared over the past 20 years on the topic. That marriage involves stress and strain on adult partners comes as no surprise (Boss 1983). That parenthood involves life-long challenges (not all of them experienced or remembered with pleasure) matches most of our experiences (Miller and Myers-Walls 1983).

Whatever the source of conflict between marital partners, separation and divorce affects large numbers of children. The experience of growing up in a single parent family is a familiar one to almost half of all children at some point during childhood. Hogan, Buehler, and Robinson (1983) have discussed the pressures on the adult with single parent status: role changes, economic stressors (especially downward economic mobility for many women), and related challenges to overall coping.

Wallerstein (1988), a prolific writer on the impact of divorce on children, outlines tasks for children to overcome following parent divorce:

1. Acknowledging the disruption caused by the marital breakup
2. Regaining a sense of mastery of one's life and environment
3. Dealing with feelings of loss and frustration
4. Forgiving the parents
5. Accepting the fact that the family will not re-integrate
6. Resolving relationships with others (both family and nonfamily members).

Children's school performance can be affected, although the evidence for boys varies somewhat from that on girls. Knoff (1987) acknowledges that many schools, aware of problems experienced by children in a single parent family, will deal cautiously with issues relating directly to family discord. Attention may be given to a child's academic or emotional needs, but few examples exist of school programs that involve parents in extended counseling or therapy with their children. Such interventions are considered the responsibility of community agencies that offer family-oriented services.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), in a fifteen year follow-up of children who experienced divorce, uncovered interesting information. The authors report that effects of divorce are long lasting, affecting children's perceptions of growing up and their commitments to the tasks of adult life. Although individual children varied in their immediate and long-term adjustment, many entered adulthood willing to experience love and marriage.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee discovered that regardless of support services to the family, the following occurred:

1. Half of the children saw one parent get a second divorce within ten years of the first
2. Half of the children reported that their parents remained angry with each other for ten or more years

3. One-fourth experienced a permanent large drop in their standard of living
4. Sixty percent reported feeling rejected by at least one parent
5. Only a few were helped financially with college education, having to handle to bulk of the responsibility for meeting all expenses.

Wallerstein is fearful that divorce in our current society is merely an extension of adult attempts at expressing individuality. [Sweet and Bumpass (1987) report, for example, that the proportion of persons who responded "no" to the question, "Should a couple stay together for the sake of the children?" increased from 51 to 81 percent between 1962 and 1982.] Too often, both during and after divorce, children suffer the consequences of a biological parent reneging on the promise of parenting. Denial of parental responsibilities does not revolve only around issues of child custody and divorce, but can appear within any facet of parent-child relationships. When a child is exposed to disruptions in family life, rejection by the parent can be a life-long blow to perceptions of self-esteem and competency.

Stepfamilies can prove a critical positive or negative influence on a child's development. Visher and Visher (1983; 1988) review the challenges of blending families with multiple stepsiblings. Kupisch (1987) provides a series of recommendations for helping children entering a stepfamily to cope with the multiple demands on their time and energies. Pasley and Ihinger-Tallman (1988) elaborate on issues relating to stepfamilies, offering suggestions to social agencies targeting services toward this segment of society.

Stolberg (1988) reviews interventions aimed at preventing divorce as well as at confronting its outcomes. Although he recognizes that schools have limited access to information on family conditions, he urges prevention programs, at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, to address the immediate needs of children and their parents (often, concerning the latter, in collaboration with other community agencies).

In closing, many forms of "family" life exist in the United States. Schaffer and Kral (1988), for example, offer useful information, to support service agencies, on the topic of foster families. Regardless of the form of household structure and the number of residents in said household, we have accumulated a wealth of evidence to support the critical influence that a parent plays in a child's life. Awareness of the importance of the parent-child dyad is important but not sufficient for developing interventions. The recommended form of parental input or involvement in the elected intervention has yet to be specified in the literature. We have a sense of the possible, but have much work to complete before we can use research to dictate practice.

Additional Risk Factors

A brief overview of child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and suicide will complete our discussion of current school programs. Examples of each focal point exist across the United States, with varying degrees of success.

Abuse and Neglect. Maltreatment of children can be documented in every society throughout history. Sufficient evidence exists to argue that maltreatment affects children in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the United States. Kadushin (1988) includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect under the label of maltreatment. Neglect can include deprivation of necessities, inadequate supervision, medical neglect, educational neglect, emotional neglect, failure to protect from injurious circumstances, and community and institutional neglect. Social care agencies target many of these circumstances, offering protection to the child under many conditions. Gaudin (1988) provides information on programs that intervene with families who neglect their children. Many schools, in addition, provide an array of programs and services to children who lack basic nutrition or clothing. Some districts coordinate their efforts with community groups (religious and private) that work with families.

Brockman (1987) describes the problem of physical abuse of children in this country, and discusses the school's role in helping the affected children. Given mandatory reporting laws, many educators who suspect abuse will report a family to designated social agencies. The school's role in collaborating with treatment plans offered by support agencies will vary by community. Brockman emphasizes that multidisciplinary, multitreatment interventions are the rule in protecting children and helping the family achieve a new, more positive standard of parent-child interactions.

Similar directions are taken in programs working with children who have been sexually abused. The court system may impose restrictions on the offender, but treatment programs often are directed at the family. Caterino (1987) notes that schools may receive limited information about problems of sexual abuse, and thus play a limited role in support services to the victim. Counseling within the school, however, can supplement other services directed at the child.

Psychological abuse of children is a relatively new area of research. A good reference to review on the problem is Brassard and Gelardo (1987). These authors believe that teachers can play a role in assisting children exposed to nonphysical forms of abuse.

Substance Abuse. Drug use by children is the concern of many parents and educators. The impact of drug use, including alcohol, on children's functioning in the school and community has been

documented. Forman and Randolph (1987) discuss the evidence on impact, and review programs that have been implemented to prevent drug use and abuse. The authors believe that the bulk of studies confirm the importance of focusing prevention programs on helping students develop personal and social coping skills. Adolescents can be taught to deal with peer pressure (social influences) and instructed on decision-making strategies.

Many intervention programs are labeled "broad spectrum," offering a wide program of services to students. Forman and Randolph review one such program that contained a cognitive component, decision-making training, anxiety management, social skills training, and self-improvement activities. Early intervention, especially in the form of primary prevention or educative programs, is implemented in many areas of the country.

Schools have been involved precisely because substance use affects classroom attendance, performance, and overall behavior. The widespread impact, or the potential of such impact without intervention, of drug use has mobilized many communities to encourage schools to assume active responsibility for implementing prevention programs.

Forbing and Fox (1986) encourage schools to extend services beyond primary prevention to include intervention with drug users in the experimental or early regular use stage, referral for treatment for those who seem preoccupied with drugs or have a chemical dependency, and follow-up care for students who have received treatment and are re-entering school. The long-term success of any intervention will depend on the willingness of staff to become involved beyond the basic demands of instruction. Many school and community programs offer training to educators so that they can play a role in recognizing problems or contributing to their solution.

Suicide. Newspaper and magazine stories of suicide pacts or sequences of suicides within a single community are seen each year. Many communities confronted with the suicide of a child will mobilize extensive resources to help the survivors and to prevent further loss. Hahn (1987) reviews the statistics on youth suicide and the programs that have been developed to prevent suicide. A great concern with adolescents especially is the high percentage (some estimates as high as 25 percent) of students who report suicidal ideation.

Some children may learn that suicidal behavior can be used as part of a strategy for coping with stress. If events become too overwhelming, they reason, suicide will offer a solution. Alternatively, suicide can be seen as a strategy to attract attention from parents or peers.

Pfeffer (1986) studied families of suicidal children and believes that explanations of a child's behavior may be rooted in the dynamics of the family (other writers consider a genetic component to suicide, as well). An inclination to suicidal behavior seems to be related to experiences of long-term stress, poor family dynamics, and a broad inability to cope. Even preschool-aged children can be at-risk in some families.

The consensus of the literature is that prevention programs, beginning at the elementary school, should focus on general skills of problem solving, coping with loss, and self-esteem. Berkovitz (1985) argues for five elements in a school district's overall strategy for dealing with suicide:

1. Positive mental health in each school
2. Experienced psychological staff members
3. A suicide prevention program operating
4. An intervention program available if needed
5. A postvention program for follow-up of attempts (p. 171).

A final recommendation well worth mentioning is offered by Cantor (1986), who urged direct measures to remove lethal substances and objects from easy access by suicidal teenagers. By limiting the availability of medications to non-lethal doses and locking up handguns, school districts can reduce successful attempts by 30 percent or more.

Conclusions from the Research Literature

Educators have multiple forms of evidence that some children do better than others in schools, fare better in peer interactions, and remain through graduation. Many children who do not graduate from school earn the label "at risk" by their action of dropping out. The current literature cannot tell educators the best strategy by which to retain every student in school until graduation. Although many programs can assist some students, other students continue to experience difficulty in school or in the community.

Society has provided services to children in need of support only for a relatively brief portion of our history (Stevens and Eide 1990). Yet in a short amount of time, attention to the needs of children has resulted in an incredible array of services, all of which grew from a consensus for action at a local, state, or national level. The impact of these programs has been evaluated in many instances, often demonstrating success on carefully selected indicators.

The laws to protect children in our society have changed as well to accommodate our current values relating to children. Melton and Wilcox (1989) have discussed the complexity of current

laws as the courts struggle to stay abreast of a society undergoing important changes in values and behavior.

A major stumbling block to researchers in studying at-risk factors and their impact on children and families is the nature of the construct "risk." As Jeffery (1989) has argued, few (if any) conclusions from large-scale studies of risk can be interpreted at the level of the individual child or family. By the nature of experimental research, large numbers of participants are included in data analyses. Conclusions, to maintain conditions of scientific rigor, often are based on information gathered from hundreds, even thousands, of cases. No researcher would argue that data gathered in such form should be used to predict a specific outcome for a single case. The unfortunate reality for many worthy programs is twofold: (1) to receive funding, programs emphasize only a portion of the existing evidence on a topic, sometimes promising more than can be delivered; (2) with funding, few programs offer a comprehensive enough program nor sufficient enough rigor in their evaluation to assess the true impact of their program (Reppucci and Haugaard 1989). Given the nature of the risk construct, a program has difficulty offering evidence that a particular intervention, rather than other factors, helped a child.

With the evidence of the potential need for services and society's level of readiness for action, educators are justified in pursuing programs for at-risk children. The fact remains, however, that much more work needs to be done, both in studying the conditions that support risk factors, and the impact of selected interventions on behaviors of concern.

Wonderful programs, targeted at abused children, the homeless, school dropouts, and many other risk groups can be found across the nation. Many of these programs demonstrate that political consensus, supported by funding from local, state, or national sources, can produce programs for children who are the focus of concern in a community. Rigorous scientific data are not needed to justify the creation of such programs, nor do many program developers ever expect true research to adequately capture the impact of a program.

Many Americans recognize the value of helping children simply in the interest of supporting the development of a future generation. Providing immediate support need not rule out, however, learning from what has been done. Educators, as they develop programs for at-risk students, should be collaborating with professionals versed in educational research and evaluation. Programs can learn from their efforts, and their learning be communicated to other programs. An ideal outcome would be to disseminate information on successes and failures to schools around the nation. [We must encourage schools to try even if failure is the eventual outcome; to do less than try may be to

deny opportunities for at-risk children.] Schools are just one portion of the community's services to children, and are beginning to coordinate, in new ways, with community agencies. After all, a child, from birth to age 18, spends only 9 percent of the total hours during a calendar year in a school!

Lieberman and Miller (1990) describe restructuring schools, a concept receiving wide attention. Given our awareness of the needs of children as well as the willingness of educators to consider implementing important changes in school structure and process, now may be an ideal time to examine what can be done to meet the diverse needs of children.

Whatever programs we develop, our concerns must result in services that start when children are young. Speece and Cooper (1990) have shown that by first grade, children already differ dramatically in their capacity to cope and succeed. Programs must begin when children are young, remain in place through all grade levels, and involve a multifaceted array of options and services. Support from the parents of these young children will be a critical ingredient in determining the success of intervention programs.

As a final note, the key agents to success of any intervention must be supported in their efforts to plan and implement new services. Educators and support professionals, already asked to deal with students regardless of need, will experience stress themselves as they consider revising current policies and practices. Karasek and Theorell (1990) recognize that the ultimate value of any plan to change the work place will center on its consideration of the conditions that acknowledge and support workers' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Schools can be a place in which adults and children can develop and thrive together.

Special Education Services to Families

The Berger and Riojas-Cortez text, in Chapter 9, offers a good introduction to issues involved in serving parents of children who are receiving special education services. One limitation to the chapter is the absence of information on another large category of exceptional children—the gifted, who, hypothetically and statistically form as large a group as the so-called handicapped. The reader who is unfamiliar with current legislation targeted at the provision of special services is advised to read the chapter closely. More experienced readers will recognize that a great deal more can be said concerning the needs and preferences of parents of exceptional children. A useful supplement to Berger and Riojas-Cortez's chapter is the text by Stewart Ehly, Jane Conoley, and David Rosenthal, Working with parents of exceptional children (Times Mirror/Mosby 1985), which covers services across the full range of exceptionalities.

Box 9.1 outlines obstacles to parental involvement in families whose children are provided special education (Shore 1986), The Special Education Handbook.

An abundance of literature is available both by professionals and parents to guide readers interested in issues related to special education services, support programs for children, siblings, and parents, and options such as parent education, counseling, and consultation (see lessons in this study guide on each option).

For recommended readings and other information on the topics covered in this lesson, see Appendix B/Lesson 9.

Box 9.1 Obstacles to Parent Involvement in the Special Education Process

Parent Beliefs/Actions	***Educator Beliefs/Actions***
Failure or inability to attend meetings with school personnel	Failure to make accommodations to ensure parents' attendance at meetings
Failure to become adequately informed about special education issues	Failure to provide parents with needed information to contribute effectively
Difficulty in asserting oneself with professionals or authority figures	Reacting to parents in cold, unsympathetic manner and projecting image of superiority and certainty
Lack of confidence in one's ability to contribute meaningfully to the process	Underestimation of the value of parent contributions
Belief that one's input will not be listened to or respected	Failure to elicit or consider parent perspective
Fear of "making waves"	Belief that parents' participation will result in confrontation with school or usurping of educators' decision-making prerogatives
Fear that school will treat child unfairly as a result of parents' assertiveness	Failure to assure parents of fair and unbiased treatment of children with special needs
Belief that educators have all the answers and should therefore make the decisions	Belief that parents do not want to be involved
Belief that one is too emotionally involved to be objective	Belief that parents are too emotionally involved and guilt-ridden to make sound educational decisions
Fear of being perceived as overanxious or overprotective	Intimation that parents are to blame for their child's learning problem
Belief, without full information, that the school is doing the best it can	Presentation of information in technical manner without explanation

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT #5

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **REVIEW** the case study that follows. Given the circumstances of the case,
- **PROPOSE** strategies that could be used to assist the parent and school to resolve perceived differences and problems.
- **SUBMIT** a typed summary of your findings or conclusions after completing the activity. Your proposal should be three to five, double-spaced pages long (or the e-mail equivalent). This assignment is worth 60 points.

Background Information

The "voice" of the case study is provided by a Coordinator of Early Intervention Services for a county mental health board. The Coordinator was part of a home-based early intervention program that provided services, including case management, to children (birth-6 years) with mental retardation and related disorders and to the families of these children. The Coordinator was responsible for the assessment of child development as well as the needs of the child and family for support services. Individualized family service plans were developed as a result of assessment. Additional services included weekly home visits, parent training, and service coordination. The job description for the Coordinator role included responsibilities as an advocate for the child and family.

In pursuit of a clarification of job expectations, the Coordinator was directed by the mental health board supervisor that she was not to confront the school district on any issue. The advocacy role was interpreted as informing parents of what they could do in accepting school offers of service.

Submit Written Assignment #5 electronically via the ICON Dropbox (**"Written Assignment #5"** folder).

- Complete and submit your assignment BEFORE moving on to the following lesson.
- Instructions on **how to upload your assignment** to the ICON Dropbox are provided on the course site (Content > Assignments).

Case Study

Cindy was a nurse who worked the third shift at the county hospital. She worked this shift so she could care for her three children during the day, while snatching an hour or two of sleep whenever she was able. Her husband worked during the day for the county but took little responsibility for the care of his children and the home. Tyler was the youngest of the three children. He had only a few intelligible words but was able to communicate his needs effectively through sounds and gestures. Prior to Tyler entering kindergarten, Cindy was extremely anxious about how Tyler would do in school and was worried that he would be labeled as trainable mentally handicapped as opposed to educable mentally handicapped. Cindy wanted to get Tyler's IQ testing over with and have his classroom placement decided as soon as possible. She once remarked that Tyler's school placement was all she could think about.

Bertha was the person in charge of testing kindergarten children for special education placement in the school district. She did all the required paper work and was in charge of the IEP meetings. I contacted Bertha in January to find out what Cindy needed to do in order to make sure the process of special education placement ran smoothly in March. March was the time when the children who would be entering kindergarten in the fall were tested. The IEP meeting was held shortly after the testing. Bertha told me some things Cindy could do in advance and said she would call me in March to inform me of when she would schedule a test time for Tyler. Cindy promptly did the things Bertha recommended such as getting an eye exam, immunizations current, etc. We arrange for office therapy recommendations to be written by various therapists, so the school could start therapy with Tyler immediately in the fall. Bertha did not contact me during the first week of March so I called her, letting her know how anxious Cindy was to get the testing over with. She stated that she was too busy to do the testing at the time and to call her back in three weeks. I called her back in three weeks and she said, "I can't do anything with Tyler until the parent calls me and officially requests special education services. Cindy tried to reach Bertha unsuccessfully for two weeks. She left messages that were never returned. Finally, Bertha called Cindy and said she would call her in April sometime to schedule a time to do paper work and testing of Tyler.

Meanwhile, Cindy decided to go visit Key Elementary, the school Tyler would be attending in the fall. Having such a tight schedule, she made this visit when she was able to have a rare hour to herself. The personnel Cindy encountered in the school were neither open or friendly. After the visit, Cindy told me that she didn't think the people at the school were happy to have her drop by

but that they took her on a tour anyway. They asked her to make an appointment the next time she planned to visit. Several hours later, I got a call from Bertha informing me that Cindy should not be dropping in at schools unannounced. Apparently, someone from Keys had called Bertha to let her know that an unwritten rule of "no visitors without appointments" had been violated and it was up to Bertha to set the violator straight. While on the phone, I asked Bertha if she had set up an appointment with Cindy to do paper work and testing. Bertha stated that she and Cindy would work out a time and that I didn't need to worry about it.

Each week when I made home visits to Cindy's house, Cindy said that she hadn't heard from Bertha. Cindy considered registering Tyler for regular kindergarten and letting the schools worry about Tyler when he showed up in a regular class, but she felt this would not be in Tyler's best interest. In mid May, I contacted Bertha and asked her when she planned to test Tyler. Bertha informed me that she would be unable to test Tyler until August because school was almost out and she just wouldn't have time to get to it. She asked me to relay this information to Cindy. I did so and Cindy was upset about this new development.

During a home visit in the middle of August, Cindy informed me that Bertha had contacted her and was going to test Tyler the next day. Bertha did not try to arrange for a convenient testing time with Cindy but informed her that this was the only time she could do testing. After the testing was over, Cindy called me and was very anxious about Tyler's test results. She said that Tyler didn't "perform" real well and that Bertha had given her no indication of what Tyler's placement might be. I called Bertha who said that Tyler received a low IQ score and would be labeled as trainable mentally handicapped. She told me not to tell Cindy, because this information would be divulged at the IEP meeting. I don't know if there was some legal reason or what for Cindy not receiving this information prior to the IEP meeting. I asked when this meeting was supposed to take place. Bertha said she would inform me of the meeting time. Two days before school started, Bertha informed Cindy and me that Tyler's IEP meeting would be the following day at 2:00 p.m. Again, there was no consideration from the school with regard to a convenient time for Cindy. I called Cindy who was very nervous about the meeting. We discussed points she wanted to cover in the meeting and I suggested she write down things she might want to say and ask at the meeting so she wouldn't have to worry about trying to remember them. Cindy said that one thing in particular she wanted to make sure of was that Tyler only went to school for a half day. In X (the particular state), a parent has the option of full or half-day kindergarten.

I arrived at Key Elementary at 2:00 p.m. Cindy was standing in the hall with Bertha and another special education administrator, Karen. Karen and Bertha were talking to each other about what they had done over the weekend, indicating a total disregard for Cindy's feelings. Cindy was listening nervously while listening to them talk about people she did not know. Bertha and Karen finished their animated conversation then acknowledged my presence and suggested we get started with the meeting. We went back to the room that was to be Tyler's new classroom (information unknown to Cindy), and met with Brenda who was introduced as Tyler's teacher.

The meeting didn't officially begin until the school staff IEP members got in 5 minutes worth of gossip about other teachers and events that were unfamiliar to Cindy and me. I thought this was a covert power play to insure that Cindy and I realized that we were outsiders in this group. It also made the statement that our time was of no value. Bertha began the meeting, rushing through Tyler's test results and labels in record speed, inserting psychological jargon at several points. She barely stopped to catch her breath and never made eye contact with anyone at the table. Bertha stated what therapy Tyler would get and how often as well as when he would be mainstreamed. It was obvious that this meeting was nothing more than a formality, held only because of the laws mandating it. All decisions about Tyler's first year in the public school system had been made prior to Cindy ever setting foot in the school. Bertha finished and turned the table over to Brenda.

Brenda, who had never met Cindy or Tyler, started by telling Cindy about different strategies she had in mind on how to deal with Tyler's inability to remain seated and inability to communicate. Brenda had made some assumptions (with no foundation) about Tyler's behavior, probably based on Bertha's reactions during her two hours of testing Tyler. Brenda did not ask Cindy if her assumptions were correct, nor did she seek to verify their validity with Tyler. Cindy, who had not said a word so far, became very defensive, standing up for Tyler, pointing out many things that he was capable of doing in the classroom. Brenda acted wounded by what she probably perceived as Cindy's attack. Brenda became very quiet and said little else.

Bertha took the meeting back over and asked Karen if she had anything to add. Karen had little to say and I question why she was even at the meeting. Bertha then asked Cindy if she had anything to add. Cindy said, "No, not really." I'm sure it was obvious to Cindy before the meeting had even started and all the way through it, that her input was of little value to anyone else. The professionals had already planned Tyler's life out for him. I looked at Cindy for a few seconds then asked, "Didn't you write down some things you wanted to bring up?" She was holding a

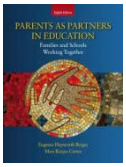
grocery receipt under the table that she had been fumbling with during the entire meeting and showed it to everybody while saying, "I just wrote some things down on here, really it's nothing." Everybody coaxed her to say what was on the list. She put her hands back under the table and just shook her head and said, "There's nothing."

I stepped in and asked, "Didn't you want to talk about Tyler going to school for half a day?" She said, "Oh, yes." There was a silence around the table. The staff did not know how to react to a parental request. Finally, Brenda stated, "He can't go for a half day, that's not how the program is set up." I asked why not, and there seemed to be no answer. Cindy commented that her other two children only went half a day and she intended for Tyler to do the same. Brenda was at a loss for words and while struggling informed us that nobody else had ever made this request and that a half-day program just wasn't done in her class. Bertha jumped in to defend Brenda, stating that there was no bus that Tyler could ride home if he went for only half day. Cindy had no problem with this, saying she would just pick him up from school. Finally, in an exasperated voice, Bertha explained that full day was what was best for Tyler, and wouldn't Cindy just rather give this a try and if she continued to want half day, something might be worked out later. I saw this as a ploy for what it was—a matter of convenience and inflexibility on the part of the school staff. A half-day program for Tyler might mean juggling around the therapy schedule that had already been planned. It was much easier to do things the way they had always been done, and not to accept any alternatives that would require change. Cindy agreed reluctantly to a full-day program despite my comments that she did not have to go along with anything with which she did not agree.

After a tour of the classroom and several other comments made by Brenda that showed her lack of awareness of Tyler's behavior, we all returned to the table. There was more talking and laughing about issues unfamiliar to Cindy and me, while Cindy and I sat in silence. Finally, I said I had to go and Cindy joined me in leaving. I walked in silence with her to her car. I then asked, "So, what do you think?" She didn't say a word but instead started sobbing uncontrollably. Words were not necessary for her to convey to me what she felt.

LESSON 10 – INFLUENCES ON COLLABORATION

READING ASSIGNMENT:



- **Berger and Riojas-Cortez,** Read Chapters 5, 10, and 12.

Instructor Comments:

Lesson Overview

This lesson will explore factors affecting parent involvement, including ethical and legal influences, and the potential for school reform efforts to influence home-school collaboration.

Discussion

Professionalism

The literature describing the essential features of professionalism has noted the importance of a strong knowledge base for professional practice. In reviewing sociological definitions of profession, Holzner and Marx (1979) found that among the most often discussed attributes are:

an abstract, theoretical knowledge base; an esoteric, specialized, technical skill; a long training and socialization; strong professional subculture and ideology; lifelong commitment to a structured career; autonomy of action; a formal occupational association; control over training and legal licensing; and a code of ethics and/or client-centered orientation—the service ideal. (pp. 333, 338)

Schon (1988) pointed out the importance to a profession of a shared body of knowledge, as well as an initiation into the traditions of a community of practitioners and their practice world. This initiation included learning the conventions, constraints, appreciative systems, systematic knowledge, and language of the profession. Yinger (1990) also noted the importance attached to professionals' learning the language of their professional practice. Formal higher education has been identified as a basic credential for professionals and has served to transmit the formal knowledge that provided a profession with a foundation for its authority (Freidson 1986).

Furthermore, a profession's claim to authority has been based upon the ability of its members to manifest their special knowledge in their interactions with their clients (Schon 1983). Yet, society has challenged the authority of professions and their monopoly over extraordinary knowledge. Professionals have been ineffective in their attempts to solve many of society's problems (Schon 1983). The rising educational level of the general public has narrowed the gap between the professional's knowledge and the public's. With this trend toward greater egalitarianism, the public

has become more active and aggressive as consumers and more inclined to challenge authority (Freidson 1986). Limitations of Formal Knowledge Freidson (1986) has characterized formal knowledge as making pervasive use of reason and as gaining functional efficiency through measurement, where possible. Formal knowledge has remained separate from common, everyday knowledge and from nonformal specialized knowledge. As a source of formal knowledge, university-based research has often been undertaken on an individual basis and, as such, has not needed to be directed toward the solution of any specific practical problem.

Practitioners have faced unique cases that have been outside the rules provided by professional knowledge (Schon 1988) and that have required some type of action irrespective of the existence of reliable knowledge (Holzner and Marx 1979). In fact, the actions of practitioners have been adapted to the practical exigencies of day-to-day work by using compromised situational judgment, informed by standards that were taught in school (Freidson 1986). The utilization of formal knowledge has been limited by individual factors as well. Holzner and Marx (1979) noted that there is a limit to the amount of information that an individual can absorb and a limit to the capacity of an individual to integrate specialized knowledge derived from divergent domains. As a result, professionals have found it advantageous and necessary to turn to colleagues for advice and help when their own knowledge becomes insufficient (Holzner and Marx 1979; Ziman 1987). Schon (1983) described the manner in which practitioners bring past experiences to bear on current, apparently unique cases. Other authors have stressed the importance of experience in drawing inferences in current situations (Grimmett 1988) and in shaping the meaning practitioners read into research and theory (Russell, Munby, Spafford, and Johnston 1988). Holzner and Marx (1979) described an additional element of working knowledge as being tacit to a large extent. This tacit element has been acquired through experience and participation rather than learned from books. It has rested on an understanding of complex relationships and processes that cannot be fully explained. Schon (1983) also described the tacit component of professional knowledge that is implicit in actions for which professionals cannot state rules and procedures. Perhaps cognizant of the limitations of formal knowledge and this tacit element of working knowledge, Ziman (1987) wrote that practitioners must begin working in their field while they are still somewhat ignorant.

Whether through practicum experiences or actual on-the-job experiences, novice practitioners have found themselves beginning to do what they do not yet understand (Schon 1988) and gaining knowledge that is unavailable from more formal sources. Learning has been, in effect, in the doing. The literature or knowledge utilization suggest that practitioners have not used professional knowledge in a consistent, uniform manner. At times, specific knowledge has provided solutions to

specific problems, or has directed practice. At other times, knowledge has provided general awareness or understanding, or has informed practice. Yet, at other times, knowledge has served as a source for reflection to transform or apprehend practice.

Knowledge use has involved the incorporation of multiple types and sources of information, with experiential knowledge providing a primary source of information for decision-making and task performance. Often, practitioners have needed to integrate knowledge from these various sources within a particular context, creating new knowledge in the process. In summary, professional practitioners have relied on divergent sources of knowledge to direct and inform their practice. Some sources of knowledge, such as technical journals and university training, have been formal. Other sources, such as personal experiences and consultation with colleagues, have been more informal. Regardless of the source, the knowledge in use has been uncertain and incomplete, and the weighting of each knowledge source in the equation of professional practice has been indeterminate.

Teachers, like other occupational groups, strive to behave in ways that supports the perception that teachers are professionals. An important element to professional functioning is formulation of standards for ethical behavior.

The Ethics of Service

The word "ethics" comes from the Greek ethos, meaning character. The word "morality" comes from the Latin word moralis, meaning customs or manners. We use the word ethics to consider the individual character of the person, and morality to discuss relationships among people. Many professional associations have published codes of ethics for their members. Strike (1990)[12] argues that teachers must be trained to engage in ethical conduct with children and adults. He argues that educators "must remind ourselves that one aspect of a profession that is genuinely self-governing and self-regulating is that professionals are capable of sustained ethical behavior apart from extensive external monitoring." (p. 47)

Strike is correct in believing that established professional groups have established codes of ethics that are used to regulate the individual members of those groups. Groups such as the American Psychological Association have worked for decades in proposing and refining statements of ethical principles that guide professional practice. Many codes contain language specific to the

[12] Strike, K. A. 1990. Teaching ethics to teachers: What the curriculum should be about. Teaching and Teacher Education 6(1):47–53.

responsibilities and competencies of members, and provide guidelines on confidentiality, adherence to legal and moral standards in a community, and inter-professional relations.

Strike supports the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession developed by the National Education Association.[13] The NEA Code primarily addresses relationships with students but does include guidance to teachers on other areas of professional conduct.

Legislation in Iowa contains reference to teacher conduct and can be interpreted as a statement on professional ethics. Selected language from previous Iowa legislation appears below.

Professional Teaching Practices Act: Selections

Ethical practice toward other members of the profession, parents, students and the community. ***Principle—commitment to the student***. The educator measures his success by the progress of each student toward realization of his potential as a worthy and effective citizen. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals. In fulfilling his obligation to the student, the educator:

a. Shall not without just cause restrain the student from independent action in his pursuit of learning, and shall not without just cause deny the student access to varying points of view.

b. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter for which he bears responsibility.

c. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

d. Shall conduct professional business in such a way that he or she does not expose the student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.

e. Shall not on the ground of race, color, creed, age, sex, physical or mental handicap, marital status, or national origin exclude any student from participation in or deny him benefits under any program, nor grant any discriminatory consideration or advantage.

f. Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

[13] National Education Association. 1977–78. NEA Handbook. Washington, D.C: National Education Association.

g. Shall keep in confidence information that has been obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

h. Shall not tutor for remuneration students assigned to his classes, unless no other qualified teacher is reasonably available.

Criteria of Competent Performance

Scope of standards. The standards set forth herein shall apply to all certificated educators. In this regard, no finding of professional incompetency shall be made except where a preponderance of evidence exists as to such incompetency.

Administrative and supervisory requirements of educators.

Competent educators must possess the abilities and skills necessary to perform the designated task.

Each educator shall:

1. Keep records for which he or she is responsible in accordance with law and policies of the school district.
2. Supervise district students and school personnel in accordance with law and policies of the school district.
3. Recognize the role and function of community agencies and groups as they relate to the school and to her or his position, including but not limited to health and social services, employment services, community teaching resources, cultural opportunities, educational advisory committees, and parent organizations.

Each teacher shall:

a. Utilize appropriate and available instructional materials and equipment necessary to accomplish the designated task.

b. Adhere to and enforce lawful policies of the school district which have been communicated to the teachers.

c. Use available channels of communication when interacting with administrators, community agencies, and groups in accordance with school district policy.

Analysis of individual needs and individual potential. The competent educator shall utilize or promote the utilization of appropriate diagnostic techniques adopted by the school district to analyze the needs and potential of individuals.

Among others, the following techniques should be considered:

1. Personal observation.
2. Analysis of individual performance and achievement.
3. Specific performance testing.

Instructional procedures. Each component educator shall seek accomplishment of the designated task through selection and utilization of appropriate instructional procedures.

Each educator shall:

a. Create an atmosphere that fosters interest and enthusiasm for learning and teaching.

b. Use procedures appropriate to accomplish the designated task.

c. Encourage expressions of ideas, opinions, and feelings.

Each teacher shall:

a. Create interest through the use of available materials and techniques appropriate to varying abilities and background of students.

b. Consider individual student interests and abilities when planning and implementing instruction.

Communication skills. In communicating with students, parents, and other educators **each competent educator,** within the limits prescribed by her or his assignment and role, **shall:**

1. Utilize information and materials that are relevant to the designated task.
2. Use language and terminology that are relevant to the designated task.
3. Use language that reflects an understanding of the ability of the individual or group.
4. Assure that the designated task is understood.
5. Use feedback techniques that are relevant to the designated task.

6. Consider the entire context of the statements of others when making judgments about what others have said.
7. Encourage each individual to state her or his ideas clearly.

Management techniques.

The competent educator shall:

1. Resolve discipline problems in accordance with the law, school district policy, and administrative regulations and policies.
2. Maintain consistency in the application of policy and practices.
3. Use management techniques that are appropriate to the particular setting such as group work, seatwork, lecture discussion, demonstration, individual projects and others.
4. Develop and maintain positive standards of student conduct.

Competence in specialization.

Competent educators shall:

1. Possess knowledge within their area of specialization consistent with their record of professional preparation.
2. Be aware of current developments in their field.
3. Possess knowledge of resources that may be utilized in improving instruction in their area of specialization.

Evaluation of learning and goal achievement. A competent educator accepts responsibility commensurate with delegated authority to evaluate learning and goal achievement, and **the competent educator shall:**

1. Utilize appropriate types of evaluation techniques.
2. Utilize the results of evaluations for planning, counseling and program modification.
3. Analyze and interpret evaluations effectively for the purpose of improving instruction.
4. Explain methods and procedures of evaluation to those concerned.
5. Provide frequent and prompt feedback concerning the success of learning and goal achievement efforts.

Human and interpersonal relationships. Competent educators maintain effective human and interpersonal relations skills and therefore:

1. Shall encourage others to respect, examine, and express differing opinions or ideas.
2. Shall not knowingly misinterpret the statements of others.
3. Shall not show disrespect for or lack of acceptance of others.
4. Shall provide leadership and direction for others by appropriate example.
5. Shall offer constructive criticism when necessary.
6. Shall comply with requests given by and with proper authority.
7. Shall not assign unreasonable tasks.
8. Shall exercise discretion and reasonable judgment in the use of authority.

The ethical teacher requires a grasp of due process, equity, legitimate authority, and privacy, according to Strike. A commitment to ethical conduct with children and adults does not cushion the teacher from the influence of legal and legislative mandates and restrictions on practice.

Legal Dimensions of Parent-Teacher Involvement

The Berger and Riojas-Cortez text, in Chapter 11, provides an excellent overview of the legislative influences on education. Refinement of the rights and responsibilities of students and parents have had, and will continue to have, a profound impact on the actions of teachers and other school staff.

The section on "Child Advocacy" is especially important, because it identifies the avenues available to parents, teachers, and others who care about children to support their education and overall development. While I will not include supplementary information on advocacy, I urge close reading of this section.

Torts and Education

Parents who are dissatisfied with the services provided by schools can sue for compensation or damages. A segment of law is devoted to consideration of educational tort liability and malpractice. Connors (1981)[14] offers a compelling examination of the elements of tort lawsuits and their implications for teachers. Torts, derived from English law, relate to civil rather than criminal or

[14] Connors, E. T. 1981. Educational tort liability and malpractice. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa.

contractual wrongs. A tort will target either a committed action or the failure to engage in an action that affects the legal rights of an individual.

Of all the forms of torts argued within American courts, two types, intentional interference and negligence, affect education.

Intentional interference. A civil wrong because of the intent of the responsible party, intentional interference can include assault (a threat) and battery (harm that befalls the victim), false imprisonment, and mental anguish. Connors describes tort cases of assault and battery in which students have sued schools because of corporal punishment. Such cases are won only in those cases in which excessive force can be proven. False imprisonment occurs when persons are held against their will. While detention is seldom considered false imprisonment, in the case of a very young child the punishment may be considered unacceptable. The courts seldom endorse claims of mental distress unless physical injuries have produced the distress.

Negligence. The courts have specified four elements of negligence: standard of care, unreasonable risk, proximate cause, and actual injury. The court examines all elements before producing a judgment. For a teacher to be found as negligent, all four elements must be present before the court will review whether the teacher acted in a reasonable fashion.

Standard of care relates to roles and responsibilities of educators to care for their students. Teachers, because they work with children, are held to high standards of care that will vary according to the age of students and the requirements of the instructional setting. Teachers of young or disabled children and teachers in potentially dangerous settings (e.g., science labs, industrial arts classrooms) are expected to monitor students closely. Supervision of every student is expected, with higher levels of monitoring in special circumstances.

Unreasonable risk language identifies the duty to protect students from harm deriving from unreasonable risks. Teachers are expected to provide teaching or coaching that will prepare students for all probably safety and instructional requirement. The "Reasonable Man" doctrine, also from English law, guides the court's deliberations. In essence, the teacher's actions are compared to the probable actions of a reasonable citizen with similar intelligence, physical attributes, perception and memory, and special skills.

The "Doctrine of Foreseeability" affects assessments of reasonable action. Could the educator, for example, have foreseen the outcome that produced injury to a student? If a teacher acted

reasonably and could not have foreseen negative consequences to the student, the teacher is seldom considered negligent.

Proximate cause is the sequential connection between the teacher's conduct (alleged to be negligent) and injury to the student. The teacher, thus, need not be (and seldom is) the direct cause of injury to the child. A common type of proximate cause relates to supervision. A teacher is not in an assigned post and a child gets hurt. The court will seek to determine if the teacher's absence was a proximate cause of the child's injuries. Connor argues that many courts and juries "will find that the teacher's absence from (the assigned area of supervision) to be the proximate cause of injury, reasoning that the injury might not have occurred if there had been adequate and proper supervision by the teacher." (p. 9)

Actual injury means real and substantial injury, resulting in serious damage or death. Tort law is not concerned with minor injuries.

Obligations of Educators

Building on case law, the courts have stated that educators have three primary obligations to their students: adequate supervision, proper instruction, and maintenance of equipment. Courts seldom hold teachers who follow organizational guidelines for instruction, maintain documentation of instruction and maintenance, and engage in reasonable conduct liable for damages. The legal doctrine of the Rule of Seven will influence considerations of the adequacy of fulfilling each obligation. Children from birth to age 7 cannot be held negligent under the law, implying that adults providing care are held to very high standards for such care. Children from ages 8–14 are presumed not to be negligent, but the educator can submit a rebuttal arguing that the student did know better than to behave in a manner that produced injury. Students from ages 5–18 (formerly 21) are considered as possibly negligent by the court; again the educator can offer a rebuttal.

When educators are targeted by a tort, the lawyer for the plaintiff often claims comparative negligence. For example, a teacher might be sued along with the school principal, superintendent, and school board. If more than one party is determined to be negligent, responsibility for damages will be divided among the negligent parties.

Connors suggests that teachers must remain aware about the legal consequences of their actions in the classroom. For example, many schools rely on release forms that request parent permission before a student can engage in a special activity. He notes that many courts consider such forms to

be worthless. Save-harmless forms have been proposed in place of parent release forms, but their status remains uncertain.

Teachers may rely on professional malpractice insurance to protect against the consequences of a tort. While insurance may attract a lawsuit (the party perceives the availability of funds to pay for damages), Connors encourages educators to purchase tort insurance. He also suggests inservice training for school staff to review how teachers can protect themselves from torts. His final advice—if sued, seek an attorney who specializes in tort cases, and do not rely on general practice attorneys.

School Reform and Home-school Collaboration

Since the Nation at Risk Report in 1983, schools have been the subject of close attention by a variety of groups. Professional organizations, business groups, parent organizations, and governmental bodies have investigated current arrangements for the education and training of children. Several reports have been issued, challenging the status quo in schools. Many recommendations have resulted from these reports. Two features commonly appear in recommendations for school reform: greater parent involvement and creation of new patterns for service delivery to students and their families.

Using the school as a locus of delivery for primary health care, childcare, preschool, and parent education, recreation, and family counseling, as well as for traditional educational activities, offers many advantages. School facilities are generally underutilized except during traditional school hours. The attached tables to this lesson provide a summary of activities being conducted to reform schools and the services they deliver.

A second major advantage of using the school as the locus of service delivery is the identification of children in need and the provision of outreach services. Children are observed daily in school, and often their appearance and behavior provide indications of problems at home.

A third advantage of school-based services is the fact that in many neighborhoods the school is the only stable social institution serving the entire community.

Still a fourth advantage of a one-stop comprehensive human service program for many low-income families is the fact that obtaining transportation to single-purpose programs scattered across the city ranges from difficult to impossible.

School-based health clinics represent a different kind of community partnership for youth. Currently eighteen projects in fifteen cities across the country are receiving support from the

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to establish school-based health services for adolescents at risk for serious sociomedical problems.

Comer's School Development Program

James Comer and his colleagues in the New Haven public schools began one of the most successful and widely publicized school improvement programs in 1968. Often referred to as either the Comer Model or the School Development Program, this model went through an initial developmental period until 1975 when the program was firmly enough established that it could be adequately documented and evaluated. The program places a heavy emphasis upon a mental health approach for dealing with problems at the elementary school level. Four major components provide the main thrust of the program—a government and management team, a mental health team, a parent participation program, and a program for curriculum and staff development.

The management team typically consists of seven adults—two elected teachers, three parents appointed by the parent organization, a mental health team member, and the school principal, who serves as leader of the team.

The mental health team includes a classroom teacher, a special education teacher, a school psychologist, and a social worker.

The parent participation program consists of three levels of participation: (1) broad-based activities for a large number of parents; (2) parents working on about a one-to-one basis with professional staff as classroom assistants, tutors, or aides; and (3) a small number of highly involved parents participating in school government.

The fourth component consists of curriculum and development activities led by the management team. A mental health approach is integrated wherever possible into curriculum planning. Teachers participate in monthly seminars and work closely with curriculum specialists. Two areas of focus are basic skill instruction in reading and mathematics and a social skills curriculum designed to improve self-concept and to enable children to cope more successfully with mainstream American society.

In the past ten years, more than fifty schools nationwide have adopted various aspects of the Comer Model. One of the features of the Comer Model that has attracted attention many is the extent to which parents are empowered through school involvement, leading to other school reforms. Parents are at the center of decision-making procedures and are viewed as essential to school governance.

Zigler's School of the 21st Century

Edward Zigler and his associates in the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University have proposed a unified system of childcare and family support using the public schools as the locus of services. Working from the fundamental principle that all children must have access to stable, good-quality child care when and if they need it and that such care should not be dependent upon family income, ethnicity, or the neighborhood in which they happen to live, they propose that child care be built into the elementary school systems of the nation at all levels.

Zigler's vision of the School of the 21st Century would make use where possible of available school buildings and would provide a variety of childcare and family support services. Many of these activities are already provided but delivered in piecemeal fashion.

First would be an all-day, year-round childcare program for preschoolers from age three to kindergarten, a program not unlike existing Head Start programs in many communities. A second component would consist of childcare from kindergarten to at least grade six, before and after school and during vacation periods. Three other components would comprise outreach services to benefit all families—a network of family day care providers, a resource and referral system, and a home-based family support and parent education program.

School of the Future (Hogg Foundation)

The overarching goal of the School of the Future project is to enrich and enhance the lives of children in these four communities. Education, physical health, and mental health are all expected to be positively influenced by the project over time. The following are some of the objectives that the various sites and Texas's Hogg Foundation are determined to accomplish within the next five years:

1. To improve the social and academic performance of students by involving their parents and the community in their education.
2. To identify and build upon the strengths of children, families, schools, and the community.
3. To offer enrichment programs that promote self-esteem and positive human development.
4. To coordinate services for children and their families in their own neighborhood.
5. To prevent or treat a variety of problems such as substance abuse, child abuse, school dropout, teen pregnancy, and suicide.

Each of the four sites has an experienced social worker as project coordinator. Responsibilities of the coordinator include the following:

1. Working with school administrators and teachers.
2. Establishing links among school district personnel, local agencies, and other potential resources for the school's children and their families.
3. Developing parent education, job training, and support programs that encourage parents to become involved.
4. Identifying major concerns and needs of the students and their families.
5. Creating an awareness of the program among school personnel, members of the community, and people who provide services and funding.[15]

In closing, school reform efforts around the United States have recognized the central role of parents in their children's education and development. Much in current reform efforts promises to increase the influence of parents on school and community services.

For selected readings on school reform issues and tables on parental involvement in school programs and characteristics of school improvement and governance reform programs, see Appendix C/Lesson 10.

[15] Holtzman, W. H., ed. 1992. School of the future. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Are you ready to take EXAM 3?

From the list below, check the readings and written assignments you have already completed and/or submitted to your instructor.

☐ **Reading Assignments:** Berger and Riojas-Cortez

- Lesson 9 – Read Chapters 3, 10, and 11. Review Chapter 2.
- Lesson 10 – Read Chapters 5, 10, and 12.

☐ **Written Assignments**

- Completed and submitted Written Assignment 5.

If you checked all the items listed above, **GO ahead and schedule your exam.** Additional information about your exam and the registration process is provided on the following page.

If you did NOT check one (or more) of the items listed above, complete the readings/assignments you are missing, THEN register for Exam 3.

EXAM 3

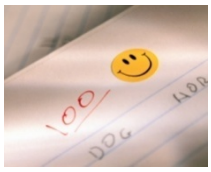
A supervised, **90 minute** examination follows Lesson 10. **Written Assignment 5 must be completed before the exam may be taken.**

The third examination should be taken as soon as possible after completing Lessons 9 and 10. The maximum time limit for the exam is ninety minutes, although you may not need that much time. The exam will consist of essay questions, divided into three areas. In each area there will be two choices—you will answer one choice per area, for a total of three responses.

In your preparations for the exam, pay close attention to both the assigned readings in the text and the course study guide. The third exam will emphasize your understanding of the content of the final two lessons plus your ability to integrate the information contained in the entire course. Thus, one area of exam three will contain two choices that will require you to address the themes contained in the entire course. The remaining two areas will be related to Lessons 9 and 10 and the readings.

The exam is closed book and closed notes; the use of a computer or other tool is not allowed. ***Good luck!***

Information regarding **exam registration**, scheduling, and policies is posted on the **course homepage** (ICON). **On campus students** taking exams at the Continuing Education Testing Center should register for their exam at least **two business days** before their intended examination day. **Off campus students** will take exams using an online proctored exam service.



I will post your **exam grades** to ICON within one week after I receive the exam from the Division of Continuing Education. **Exams cannot be returned**, but if you are in the area and would like to inspect your graded exam, please e-mail me to make an appointment.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester you will receive an **email inviting you to submit a Course Evaluation**. We would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few moments to complete it. Your evaluation and additional written comments will help us improve the Continuing Education courses we offer.

Students who complete their GIS course in **two semesters** will receive the email invitation at the end of the second semester.

NOTE:

- Your evaluation and additional written comments **will not** be forwarded to your instructor until all final grades have been submitted.

Transcript

Upon completion of this course, your final grade will be entered on your permanent student record at The University of Iowa. **Official transcripts** of your permanent record can be obtained from the Office of the Registrar, The University of Iowa, 1 Jessup Hall, Iowa City IA 52242-1316.

- For information on the **current transcript fee** or to access the **transcript request form**, visit *http://registrar.uiowa.edu/transcripts/*.
- Transcripts may be ordered:
  - **ELECTRONICALLY** through ISIS - *http://isis.uiowa.edu/*
  - **BY PHONE** – Call the Office of the Registrar with your request – (319) 335-0230.
  - **BY MAIL or FAX** – Print, complete, and mail your **transcript request form** to: Office of the Registrar, Attn: Transcripts, 1 Jessup Hall, Iowa City IA 52242. Completed forms can also be faxed to: (319) 335-1999. **Note:** Your signature is required on the request. Requests are fulfilled in a minimum of two working days.

APPENDICES

Readings for Lesson 6

- Appendix A

Readings for Lesson 9

- Appendix B.1
- Appendix B.2
- Appendix B.3

Readings for Lesson 10

- Appendix C.1
- Appendix C.2
- Appendix C.3
- Appendix C.4

APPENDIX A: COUNSELING, PARENT CONSULTATION, AND PARENT EDUCATION COMPARED

	Counseling	Consultation	Education
Relationship	Important	Important	Less Important
Use of Materials	Little	Adjunct	Core
Individual or Group	Both	Both	Usually Group
Primary Focus	Parent	Parent/Child	Parent/Child
Modality	Affective	Cognitive/Affective	Cognitive
Content	Personal	Personal	Books, Films, Handouts
Number of Sessions	Varies—May be Long-term	Varies—Often Short-term	Set Number
Psychological State of Parent(s)	Assumed Poor	Assumed Good	Assumed Good

APPENDIX B.1: RECOMMENDED READINGS ON FAMILIES IN DISTRESS

Ambert, A. M. 1992. *The effects of children on parents*. New York: Haworth Press.

Apter, S. J. 1982. *Troubled children, troubled systems*. New York: Pergamon.

Aries, P. 1962. *Centuries of childhood*. New York: Vintage.

Auerbach, S. M., and A. L. Stolberg, eds. 1986. *Crisis intervention with children and families.* Washington: Hemisphere.

Bellah, R. N., R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S. M. Tipton. 1991. *The good society*. New York: Knopf.

Bellah, R. N., R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S. M. Tipton. 1986. *Habits of the heart. Individualism and commitment in American life.* New York: Harper and Row.

Bigner, J. J. 1989. *Parent-child relations*. 3d ed. New York: Macmillan.

Biklen, D. P. 1983. *Community organizing*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Blake, J. 1989. *Family size and achievement*. Berkeley: University of California.

Bond, L. A., and B. M. Wagner, eds. 1988. *Families in transition: Primary prevention programs that work*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Boswell, J. 1988. *The kindness of strangers.* New York: Pantheon.

Camporesi, P. 1989. *Bread of dreams.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Coontz, S. 1992. *The way we never were. American families and the nostalgia trap*. New York: BasicBooks.

Cremin, L. A. 1988. *American education: The metropolitan experience, 1876–1980*. New York: Harper and Row.

Dawley, A. 1991. *Struggles for justice. Social responsibility and the liberal state*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

D'Emilio, J., and E. B. Freedman. 1988. *Intimate matters: A history of sexuality in America.* New York: Harper and Row.

Demos, J. 1986. *Past, present, and personal: The family and the life course in American history.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Epstein, N., S. E. Schlesinger, and W. Dryden, eds. 1988. *Cognitive-behavioral therapy with families*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Evans, S. M. 1989. *Born for liberty: A history of women in America*. New York: The Free Press.

Friedberger, M. 1989. *Shake-out. Iowa farm families in the 1980s.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Gans, H. J. 1988. *Middle American individualism. Political participation and liberal democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldstein, A. P., S. J. Apter, and B. Harootunian. 1984. *School violence*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Goldstein, A. P., H. Keller, and D. Erne. 1985. *Changing the abusive parent.* Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.

Goodnow, J. J., and W. A. Collins. 1990. *Development according to parents. The nature, sources, and consequences of parents' ideas.* London: Erlbaum.

Hains, A. A., and M. Szyjakowski. 1990. A cognitive stress-reduction intervention program for adolescents. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 37:79–84.

Hendricks, L. 1988. Teen age fathers. *Adolescence* 23:711–720.

Holtzman, W. H., ed. 1992. School of the future. Austin, TX: American Psychological Association and Hogg Foundation.

Ianni, F. A. J. 1989. *The search for structure: A report on American youth today*. New York: The Free Press.

Jones, J. 1992. *The dispossessed. America's underclasses from the Civil War to the present.* New York: Basic Books.

Kindred, L. W., D. Bagin, and D. R. Gallagher. 1990. The school and community relations. 4th edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Kozol, J. 1991. *Savage inequalities. Children in America's schools.* New York: Crown.

Mijuskovic, B. 1988. Loneliness and adolescent alcoholism. *Adolescence* 23:503–516.

McCubbin, H. I., and C. R. Figley, eds. 1983. *Stress and the family: Coping with normative transitions*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Mintz, S., and S. Kellogg. 1988. *Domestic revolutions: A social history of American family life*. New York: The Free Press.

Modell, J. 1989. *Into one's own. From youth to adulthood in the United States, 1920–1975.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Okin, S. M. 1989. *Justice, gender, and the family*. New York: Basic Books.

Phillips, R. 1988. *Putting asunder: A history of divorce in western society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pitcher, G. D., and S. Poland. 1992. *Crisis intervention in the schools.* New York: Guilford Press.

Pollock, L. A. 1983. *Forgotten children: Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Procidano, M. E., and C. B. Fisher, eds. 1992. *Contemporary families: A handbook for school professionals*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Riley, G. 1991. *Divorce: An American tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sarason, S. B. 1988. *The creation of settings and the future societies*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Brookline Books.

Sarason, S. B. 1982. *The culture of the school and the problem of change.* 2d ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Sarason, S. B. 1988. *The making of an American psychologist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sarason, S. B. 1990. *The predictable failure of educational reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sarason, S. B. 1988. *The psychological sense of community.* Reprint. Cambridge: Brookline Books.

Scarre, G. Ed. 1989. *Children, parents and politics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schorr, L. B. 1989. *Within our reach—Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*. New York: Doubleday.

Silverman, P. 1988. In search of new selves: Accommodating to widowhood. In *Families in transition,* edited by L. A. Bond and B. M. Wagner, 200–220. Newbury Park: Sage.

Skolnick, A. 1991. *Embattled paradise. The American family in an Age of Uncertainty.* New York: Basic Books.

Skrtic, T. M. 1991. *Behind special education. A critical analysis of professional culture and school organization*. Denver: Love.

Stone, L. 1979. *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500–1800*. New York: Harper and Row.

Stone, L. 1993. *Broken lives: Separation and divorce in England 1660–1857*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sutton, J. R. 1988. *Stubborn children: Controlling delinquency in the United States, 1640–1981*. Berkeley: University of California.

Sweet, J. A., and L. L. Bumpass. 1987. *American families and households*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Wallerstein, J. S., and S. Blakeslee. 1990. *Second chances. Men, women, and children a decade after divorce*. New York: Ticknor and Fields.

Wong, K. K. 1990. *City choices, education and housing*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Yaukey, D. 1985. *Demography: The study of human population*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

APPENDIX B.2: FAMILY FACTORS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: RESEARCH BY SANDRA CHRISTENSON

1. **Parent Expectations and Attributions:**
   Realistic, high parent expectations for children's school performance are associated with positive academic performance, regardless if the children's perceptions of or actual parent expectations are investigated. The degree to which parents hold expectations or how parents communicate their expectations to children have been found to differ as a function of gender, SES, and parental occupation. Effort attributions are associated positively with academic performance.

2. **Structure for Learning:**
   Children who come from a family environment characterized by a press for achievement tend to get higher grades and perform better on achievement tests. Parents encourage academic and intellectual pursuits by structuring children's time for homework completion, encouraging verbal conversations, modeling reading and learning, encouraging children to read at home, and limiting television watching so the child can participate in other educationally-related activities.

3. **Home Affective Environment:**
   A positive parent-child relationship is related to academic success. Parents who accept, nurture, encourage, and are emotionally responsive to their child's developmental needs tend to have children who are successful in school. This affective relationships not associated with IQ, SES, or gender of the child.

4. **Discipline:**
   Parental discipline characterized by setting clear standards, enforcing rules, and encouraging discussion, negotiation, and independence is associated with positive academic outcomes. Over- and under-control are correlated negatively with student achievement. There is some evidence that the relationship between parenting styles and achievement varies as a function of gender and ethnicity.

5. **Parent Involvement:**
   Parents participate in education both at home and at school. There is a substantial body of literature that documents the positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement. There is some evidence to show that the effects are most comprehensive when parents are

involved both at home and school. Parent involvement in home learning activities that support school instruction is a strong, significant correlate of academic outcomes for students.

APPENDIX B.3: VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN DALLAS ISD. AN EXAMPLE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- tutoring
- a listener program
- assisting teachers (preparing materials, typing, mimeographing, duplicating, monitoring tests, preparing bulletin boards)
- library work [processing and shelving books, assisting with classes, RIF (Reading is Fundamental) reading and book distribution, making tape recordings, storytelling, decorating bulletin boards]
- school office assistance (enrollment and pre-enrollment work, answering telephones, attendance monitoring, high school registration, filing, typing, duplicating, clerical assistance)
- classroom enrichment through SPARK (special programs for enrichment of knowledge, arts and crafts, music, physical education, mini-courses)
- lunchroom and playground supervision
- health room work (18-hour Red Cross training, clinic assistance, special health screening)
- other school activities (local school or districtwide volunteer training, sponsoring school club activities, taking pictures of students, assisting assembly programs and classroom parties, interpreting for non-English-speaking parents, orienting new students to school, telephoning parents to check on student attendance, making costumes or scenery, preparing food for student activities or teacher appreciation, helping with senior class activities)
- chaperoning (field trips and local and out-of-town band, orchestra, and choral activities)
- transportation (taking a child other than one's own to a doctor, taking sick children to their homes, driving participants to athletic and other events and contests)
- traffic and bus safety (assisting at safety patrol meetings, monitoring on buses, assisting with local and unloading buses)
- after-school and summer programs (tutoring hours in summer are counted districtwide unless a particular school is specified)

- volunteer direction (telephoning, attendance at school and volunteer office-sponsored orientation and training sessions and special workshops, activities related to recruitment, placement, volunteer recording-keeping, recognition, etc.
- workshops (attendance at workshops and training sessions and meetings and individual orientation with teachers and other school personnel)
- community involvement (advisory committee meetings, career counseling, making learning materials at home or school, sponsoring field trips, collecting and disbursing school clothing)
- volunteer executive committee work (assisting volunteer program activities, planning volunteer recognition)
- Dallas City Council or PTA Board of Managers (activities directly affecting students and parents)
- Positive Parents of Dallas (an arm of the PTA that concentrates on providing information to the media)
- PTA activities, except attendance at board meetings and general meetings
- No fund-raising activities are counted by the District as volunteer hours.

FROM: Michael, B., ed. 1990. *Volunteers in public schools*, 66–67. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

APPENDIX C.1: SELECTED READINGS ON SCHOOL REFORM ISSUES

Cohn, M. M., and R. B. Kottkamp. 1993. *Teachers—The missing voice in education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Farber, B. A. 1991. *Crisis in education: Stress and burnout in the American teacher.* San Francisco: Josse-Bass.

Hammer, M., and J. Champy. 1993. *Reengineering the corporation*. New York: HarperCollins.

Hughes, R. 1993. *Culture of complaint: The fraying of America.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Procidano, M. E., and C. B. Fisher, eds. 1992. *Contemporary families: A handbook for school professionals*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sarason, S. B. 1990. *The predictable failure of educational reform*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Slavin, R. E., N. L. Karweit, and N. A. Madden. 1989. *Effective programs for students at risk*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Wong, K. K. 1990. *City choices: Education and housing*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

APPENDIX C.2: CHARACTERISTICS OF FIVE PROGRAMS INVOLVING PARENTS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION*

Characteristics	Transparent School Model	Family Study Institute	Family Math and Science Programs
Target Population	Poorly performing urban public elementary and middle schools.	Public elementary schools serving predominantly low-income minority populations.	Low-income female and minority students and their parents.
Origins and Development	Developed in 1987 at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. Piloted in 1987 in an Alabama grade school and in 1989 in a Tennessee middle school.	Developed by the nonprofit Academic Development Institute; piloted in 1985 in three Chicago elementary schools.	Family Math developed in 1981 at the University of California, Berkeley; Family Science developed in 1988 at Portland State University in Oregon.
Scope	Since 1900, the model has been in use in 36 Head Start programs, elementary schools, and middle schools in eight states.	Program's courses offered in 55 elementary schools in Chicago, 50 other schools in Illinois, and 20 schools elsewhere.	More than 600 Family Math programs in 27 states, with 15,000 students and their parents having participated. Family science now available in 31 states through 70 school and community agencies.
Goals	To remove barriers to interaction between parents and teachers by keeping parents informed daily about school activities.	To help parents create a positive study environment at home, communicate with their children about school, and improve their children's language skills.	To improve math and science skills of at-risk students and involve their parents as partners in their children's learning.

* From: Fruchter, N., A. Galletta, and J. L. White. 1992. New Directions in Parent Involvement. Academy for Educational Development. Table 2, pp. 38–39; Table 3, pp. 52–53; and Table 4, pp. 73–74. Reprinted by permission of the Academy for Educational Development.

Characteristics	Transparent School Model	Family Study Institute	Family Math and Science Programs
Components	School personnel record telephone messages about homework, school land classroom activities. Messages can be electronically targeted to individuals or groups of parents, who can leave recorded responses.	Two courses sponsored by individual schools that provide classes, materials, and home learning activities to parent participants. Child care and other incentives offered to recruit and retain parents.	Training-of-trainer model that provides classes on math and science activities for parents and children to learn together and use at home.
Resources Provided	Program provides computer equipment, technical installation and expertise, and training of school personnel for setup	Written curriculum materials and training provided to parent leaders, who in turn instruct other parents.	Instructional training, materials, and resource guides available to parents, school staff, and community agency, who then train other parents.
Funding	Various financial support from local public funds, parent-teacher groups, businesses, and foundations.	Originally funded by the Joyce Foundation. Schools purchase the curricula and sponsor the courses, often with funding from local foundations and businesses.	Development funds for Family Math provided by U.S. Department of Education. Development of Family Science funded by Chevron Corporation.
Evaluation	Evaluation conducted to determine increase in parent-**initiated** contacts with school after program installation. One school reported 1,000 calls in one week. Teachers report increased homework completion and improved parent attitudes. No difference found in usage by socioeconomic level.	Study conducted by University of Chicago addressing the quality of program implementation and the relationship of parent attitudes and behavior to student achievement. Evaluation included comparison study of students which indicated improvement on achievement test scores of children of participating parents.	Extensive independent evaluations on both programs using interviews, observation, and surveys to determine conceptual leaning, home implementation, and attitude changes.

APPENDIX C.3: CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

From: Fruchter, N., A. Galletta, and J. L. White. 1992. New Directions in Parent Involvement. Academy for Educational Development. Table 3, pp. 53–54.

Characteristics	School Development Program	Accelerated Schools	League of Schools Reaching Out	Center for Collaborative Education (Coalition of Essential Schools)
Target Population	Poorly performing public schools serving poor, predominantly minority children	Poorly performing public schools serving educationally at-risk or disadvantaged students.	Mostly public but some private schools. Mostly schools serving low-income students.	Public elementary, middle, and high schools in New York City, serving predominantly low-income populations.
Origins and Development	Developed by the Yale University Child Study Center (James Comer and colleagues). Initiated in two New Haven elementary schools in 1968. Continuous development in New Haven and other districts since.	Developed by Center for Education Research at Stanford University (Henry Levin and colleagues) and initiated in 1986 at San Francisco and Redwood City, CA elementary schools.	Initiated by the Institute for Responsive Education (Don Davies, director) at Boston University, 1990. Developed from pilot project, Schools Reaching Out, 1987–89.	Umbrella organization for staff- and parent-initiated public schools; initial school started by Deborah Meier in 1978. Organization is consortium of school directors, staff, and parents founded in 1987.

Characteristics	School Development Program	Accelerated Schools	League of Schools Reaching Out	Center for Collaborative Education (Coalition of Essential Schools)
Scope	Initially, New Haven schools, subsequently, Benton Harbor, MI, and Prince Georges County, MD, school systems. Training programs initiated in 1991 to expand to many more school systems.	Initially, two California schools, now many schools nationwide. Satellite centers in universities in San Francisco, Houston, New Orleans, Seattle, and Los Angeles to provide facilitation and support, State programs in Missouri (10 elementary schools), California (15), and Illinois (25).	In 1990, 40 urban public schools. In 1991, 70 public (including rural) and private schools, including some clusters of urban public schools.	15 New York City public schools (6 elementary, 2 middle, and 7 high schools) are full members. Several other public schools are exploring membership. The Center is also the New York City affiliate of the Coalition of Essential Schools.
Goals	Improve academic performance and school success of poor minority students. Build parent-staff collaboration to develop trust and reduce the sociocultural gap between home and school. Use developmental principles to improve schools' responsiveness to children's needs.	Improve the academic performance of disadvantaged students by acceleration rather than remediation. Eliminate the achievement gap through interventions that significantly reorder curriculum, instruction, and organization through collaborative efforts of the school community.	Develop partnerships among families, schools, and communities to improve schools. Through these family-school-community collaborations, develop interventions to ensure that all students, particularly low-income students, achieve academic success.	Help young people learn to use their minds well. The Center seeks to develop student-centered schools that stress active learning for all students, and school communities characterized by diversity, school-family partnerships, and shared decision-making by staff and families. It also works to help transform other schools using the accomplishments of its member schools.

Characteristics	School Development Program	Accelerated Schools	League of Schools Reaching Out	Center for Collaborative Education (Coalition of Essential Schools)
Components	Governance and management team including parents, teachers, administration, and support staff, focusing on children's developmental needs. Parent program stressing continuum of activities from school support to governance roles.	Interventions, developed by collaborative processes, stress unity of purpose, empowerment, and building strengths. Five-stage implementation process involving assessment, articulating a vision, developing an action plan, working through a shared governance system, and implementing a collaborative inquiry process.	Overall strategy stresses core ideology that all children can learn; strong buy-in from participating schools; action plan with three key components; (parent center, parent outreach workers, teacher research team); on-site help from facilitators; national recognition and visibility; discretionary funding through external (nondistrict) grants; loving critics.	Principles for student-centered schools; vision; high academic standards for all students; focused curriculum ("less is more"); small size and scale; student as worker and student as citizen; authentic assessment; school tone stressing values of expectations and decency; family input; shared decision-making; diversity; choice; regular budget, including planning for staff.
Resources Provided	Originally, project director, support staff, and planning time. Currently, a teacher preparation curriculum, training for school staffs, training and support materials.	Facilitators from Satellite Centers help schools implement program. Some funding to schools through external grants. Some incremental district support to schools.	Facilitators in some participating schools. Grants to some schools. Information newsletters, resource guides, and directories of participating schools. Networking, conferences, and connections or referrals to other reform efforts.	Tours, conferences, publications focused on accomplishments of member schools. Intervisitations, institutes, workshops, residencies, and technical assistance so schools learn from each other. School reform projects, newsletters, conferences, and networking to advance school restructuring nationally.

Characteristics	School Development Program	Accelerated Schools	League of Schools Reaching Out	Center for Collaborative Education (Coalition of Essential Schools)
Funding	Originally, major foundations, U.S. Department of Education, National Institute of Mental Health, and Yale University. Currently, major foundations, state and local district support.	Foundations; Stanford University; and state education departments in Missouri, Illinois, California, Connecticut, and other states.	Foundations; U.S. Department of Education grant to Center on Families, Schools, Communities, and Children's Learning for research and evaluation.	Foundations.
Evaluation	Comparative longitudinal evaluations for New Haven and Benton Harbor participating schools, based on standardized test scores, and indices of attendance, suspensions, corporal punishment. Results indicate clear gains in participating schools.	Initial comparative evaluations for standardized test scores and attendance outcomes indicate impressive gains. Comprehensive evaluations being conducted by Chapter 1 Research and Technical Assistance Center, University of Kansas; Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress.	Extensive ethnographic reports and analysis of pilot project. Extensive evaluation planned through the National Center for Families, Schools, Communities and Children's Learning.	Longitudinal studies of individual schools, using ethnographic methods and analysis of outcome data. Documentation of innovative school practices and study of accountability processes by Center for School Reform, Teachers College. Comprehensive longitudinal study of school outcomes.

APPENDIX C.4: CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR GOVERNANCE REFORM PROGRAMS

From: Fruchter, N., Galletta, A., and White, J. L. (1992). New Directions in Parent Involvement. Academy for Educational Development. Table 4, pp. 73–74.

Characteristics	Kentucky	Chicago	Los Angeles	Dade County
Target Population	Students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and student education officials involved in, or responsible for, Kentucky's public schools.	Parents, community constituents, teachers, and administrators of public schools.	Teachers, administrators, and parents in public schools.	Teachers in all public schools.
Origins and Development	Lawsuit brought by Council of Basic Education in 1985 resulted in state supreme court's ruling state educational system unconstitutional in 1989 and requiring General Assembly to develop comprehensive reform. Assembly-appointed task force designed plan, passed by assembly and signed by governor in April 1990 as Kentucky's Education Reform Act (KERA).	School reform, education advocacy, civic, and business groups initiated campaign in 1987, which culminated in state legislative Act, revised and signed by Illinois governor in fall 1988. Act revised by legislature in 1991 as result of challenge to constitutionality by Principals' Association.	Negotiated by board of education and United Teachers of Los Angeles, spring, 1989 and codified in teachers' contract. Reform was also priority of new superintendent, previously of Dade County.	Original impetus from state legislative mandates in mid-1970s. District efforts to create school-based budgeting and decentralized decision-making, since late 1970s. Specific initiative instituted with union support and introduced as pilot in 1987.
Scope	Restructures education and governance in Kentucky's approximately 1,400 schools.	All 540 of Chicago's schools.	Mandates shared decision-making in all L.A. schools in 1989-90, and creates school-based management pilot in 70 schools in 1990–91.	Creates school-based management in 32 pilot schools in 1987–88 and projects expansion to all district schools by 1991–92.
Goals	Supreme Court directed legislature to produce free, available, uniform system with equal opportunity and adequate education for all students. KERA revised state funding, governance, performance standards and assessment, teacher certification, and school and district accountability measures.	Improve schools and thereby improve students' academic achievement. Decentralize pyramidal administrative power. Lodge decision-making at the school level. Give parents primary decision-making power.	Improve student achievement by building trust; empowering teachers as on-site experts to make better decisions about schooling; lodging decision-making at school level.	Teacher professionalization: increase teacher participation in school management. Improvement in instruction through collaborative management. Improvement in student achievement as long-term result.

Characteristics	Kentucky	Chicago	Los Angeles	Dade County
Components	KERA creates school-based decision-making through school council composed of principal, three teachers, two parents. Selection procedures are specified. All schools must implement SBDM by 1996. Powers of school councils include appointing staff and principal; designing curriculum and selecting technology; assigning staff and scheduling students; determining space usage and instructional policy; allocating funds for materials and student support services; disbursing discretionary state funds; determining responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, counselors, and principal; developing and implementing discipline policy.	Local school councils elected by mandated procedures in every school. Membership: six parents, two community representatives, two teachers and the administrator. Powers: appoints principal, who has contract but no tenure; develops and approves school improvement plan; develops and approves school budget, including Chapter 1 funds. Professional Personnel Advisory Committee composed of teachers, advises councils and principal about curriculum, staff development, school improvement, and budget issues.	Two components: Shared Decision-making (SDM) and School-based Management (SBM). SDM: Local school leadership council in every school. Membership: Council is 50 percent teachers, remainder parents, community representatives, and other school employees. Co-chaired by principal and union chapter leader. Councils determine some (minimal) school expenditures; calendar scheduling; use of school equipment; student discipline policy; staff development policy. SBM: Proposal process for participating schools. Guidelines for proposals: articulate vision, develop cost-effective plans requiring no additional funding; request waivers from counter-productive procedures; no negative effects on other schools.	Governing Council in each school. Every school decides structure of council and process of choosing members. Council has considerable power over curriculum, personnel, and budget. Each council determines areas of discretion and request waivers of district rules and procedures, contractual requirements, and state education department regulations.
Resources Provided	Other than funding (see below), none thus far. No training for councils has yet been provided, nor has technical assistance or facilitation for councils been required.	Redirection of state Chapter 1 aid from central administration to schools. Training, facilitation, technical assistance, and information to Local School Councils.	Training for all local councils, as well as additional training for councils whose schools participate in School-based Management pilot.	Initial and in-service training for governing councils. Provision of funds for substitutes to facilitate council meetings.

Characteristics	Kentucky	Chicago	Los Angeles	Dade County
Funding	Local school boards required to provide proportion of district's allocation to schools directly to school council for disbursement. State will develop formulas governing these allocations, and will also establish School Council Discretionary Fund to make additional grants to councils on a proportional student basis.	No new funds in Reform Act—instead, redirection of funding decisions to school level. Redirection of state Chapter 1 funds from central administration to schools. Each local council also receives $1,500 in district funds for training. Foundation and business support for training, information, and resources.	Training provided by district and teachers union for all councils and School-based Management schools. No foundation resources.	District resources provide training, in-service, and support for meeting time.
Evaluations	A new statewide system, stressing performance-based evaluation, will attempt to measure progress across a wide range of indicators to determine school and district performance.	No evaluation specified by Reform Act. Foundation-supported consortium formed to design comprehensive evaluation.	School board's independent Analysis Unit conducts yearly evaluation of both SDM and SBM. No district plan for comprehensive evaluation.	Three-year evaluation by district, including both process (implementation variables) and outcomes (attitudinal change and student and school performance measures) covering 1987–90.