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TEACHERS INVOLVING PARENTS: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE EFFECTS OF A MINOR INTERVENTION

by

Dan Domes

B.A., University of Manitoba, 1974

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS in the Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

April 1993

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APPROVAL

Name: Daniel Arthur Domes
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: Teachers Involving Parents: Teachers' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Practices of Parent Involvement and the Effects of a Minor Intervention
Examining Committee:
Chair: Geoffrey Madoc-Jones

Peter Coleman
Senior Supervisor

Michael Manley-Casimir
Professor

Peter Grimmett
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.
External Examiner

Date Approved April 2, 1993
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Teachers Involving Parents: Teachers' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Practices of Parent Involvement and the Effects of a Minor Intervention

Author

Daniel Arthur Domes

April 2, 1993
ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates teacher attitudes, perceptions, and practices related to parent involvement, and examines changes resulting from a minor intervention intended to enhance levels of home-school collaboration. It is based on data collected during the first year of a multi-site, multi-year research project designed to identify and modify critical variables mediating collaborative relationships between teachers, parents, and students, with the goal of facilitating student learning. Originally conceived as an investigation of the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and parent involvement, the focus of this thesis was broadened somewhat after initial analysis revealed the data would not support so specific an investigation.

Current research is consistent in identifying a positive correlation between parent involvement and a variety of desirable outcomes, including student achievement, parent and teacher attitudes, and school climate. It indicates that although practical and attitudinal barriers to increased parent participation exist, successful parent involvement programs can be implemented. Teacher sense of efficacy is identified as a variable significantly correlated with levels of parent involvement.

Twelve upper intermediate teachers from seven schools in two British Columbia school districts constituted the sample for this study. Two interviews were administered to each teacher, one in the fall of the school year prior to a one day training session focusing on parent involvement strategies, and one near the end of the school
year. Qualitative analysis of the interviews reveals patterns in teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding parent involvement, and identifies changes occurring in these domains.

Teachers generally express positive attitudes to parent involvement in terms of its potential benefits, and indicate a desire for more parental support in learning activities at home and in the classroom. They believe that parents should help, are able to and want to help, and that relations between parents and teachers are for the most part positive and professional. Nevertheless, teachers in this sample perceive minimal parent involvement in the intermediate grades, and practice little themselves. They identify significant obstacles to increasing levels of parent involvement. Changes in teachers' strategies for facilitating teacher-parent communication resulted in a perceived increase in levels of parent involvement and positive changes in student attitudes and behaviour.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research in parent involvement, and validate the findings of other researchers involved in the larger project. When teachers communicate frequently with parents regarding what their child is doing at school and how the parents can assist, positive outcomes are likely to result.
DEDICATION

To my parents, Art and Mary Domes, for instilling in me
a love of learning

To my sons, David and Karl Domes, in the hope
that they too will grow to love learning

and

To Alice, for everything.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Peter Coleman and Mike Manley-Casimir at Simon Fraser University for their willingness to share their learning and assist and support me in my endeavours. In different ways, both men set examples to which I aspire.

I want to thank Yvonne Tabin for her dependable, timely assistance.

Finally, I want to recognize the good humour, encouragement, advice, and support provided by Sheilagh Foster, Sharon Cairns, Colleen Larson, Judy Radysh, and Steve Agabob. Without them, it would have been a lonely road.
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It is generally accepted that home and school experience combine to influence the educational achievement and attitudes of the individual child. Numerous studies and reviews of the research (Barth, 1979; Conrad and Eash, 1983; Epstein, 1984; Fehrman, Keith, and Reimers, 1987; Henderson, 1987; Lyons, Robbins, and Smith, 1983; and Walberg, 1984) have documented the significance of the interaction between school and home environments as a determinant of student attitudes and achievement.

To suggest that the home environment is shaped largely by parental actions and attitudes seems self evident. Similarly, individual teachers control to a very large degree the school experience of the children, which in turn molds their attitudes toward formal education. The children, too, are significant players in this three-way relationship, influencing through their actions both their parents and teachers. It seems reasonable, then, to assert that the researcher who wishes to extend the understanding of the relationships between families and schools, and the outcomes resulting from these relationships, must necessarily focus attention on the behavior and attitudes of parents, teachers, and students in a context of mutual interaction. One way to conceptualize this relationship is as a triad, in which each of the players interacts with the others in mutually influential ways. Research focusing on one part of the triad without adequate consideration of the influence of the others is likely to result in an incomplete or partial understanding of the relationship.
THE LARGER RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study is part of a larger, multi-site, multi-year research effort coordinated by Dr. Peter Coleman at Simon Fraser University, designed to gain further understanding of the variables mediating the relationship between parents, teachers, students, and schools. Collinge and Coleman (1992) summarize the general objectives of the larger research project:

The first purpose of the larger project is to identify the critical variables affecting collaboration between parents, teachers, and students. The second is to develop, through a series of interventions, a more collaborative relationship between parents, teachers, and students such that all see themselves as collaborators in the production of learning. This work is driven by the belief that collaborative relationships between home and school should increase the likelihood of students identifying with the school and participating in its activities. The third purpose of the larger project, then, is to determine if a student's sense of identity with the school can be heightened through improved interactions between home and school; and whether this has any impact upon the transition to junior secondary school and potentially upon the drop out decision. (p. 2)

This research is generative in nature. Its first purpose is not to test hypotheses, but rather to study the student-teacher-parent triad to identify and more clearly describe the linkages informing this potentially collaborative three way relationship. The general research design believed most appropriate for this type of investigation is exploratory in format, and involves both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Survey questionnaires for parents, students, and teachers produced a body of raw data for quantitative analysis to uncover and
identify the relative significance of variables mediating the triad relationship. In depth, semi-structured interviews with all teachers and a selected sub-sample of students and parents provide a second source of data which, when subjected to qualitative analysis, yielded information to illuminate the quantitative results, providing a fuller picture and giving voice to the linkages identified statistically.

The general theoretical framework upon which the larger research project is based, as well as the variables believed critical to mediating the home school relationship, are summarized in Figure 1 by Coleman, Collinge, and Seifert (1992). In Figure 1, the letters S, P, and T refer to Student, Parent, and Teacher; SCH is the abbreviation used for School.

![Figure 1. The Triad and the Reference Groups. (Collinge and Coleman, 1992)](image-url)
COMBINING INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH TEAM

RESPONSIBILITIES

From a personal standpoint, a better understanding of the variables related to parent involvement would help me move closer to a personal goal. As a beginning administrator and graduate student in educational administration, I wish to develop my understanding of ways in which I might enhance the quality of the school experience, not only for the children for whom I am partly responsible, but also for the teachers who work with these children on a daily basis. Gaining knowledge in these areas seems to hold promise of a way of at least partly achieving that goal.

Further to this, the opportunity to work under the direction of Dr. Coleman, with a group of master's students and doctoral candidates pursuing similar interests, made participation in the larger research project an attractive proposition. I anticipated that by playing a role in a major study of the sort being implemented by Dr. Coleman, I would have the opportunity to learn a considerable amount about social science research methods. The opportunity of benefitting from the insight and experience of Dr. Coleman and fellow researchers was seen as an added advantage. Neither of these outcomes would have been as likely were I working in isolation on a research project individually conceived and much smaller in scope.

With these research questions and personal goals in mind, in the late summer of 1990 I made the decision to join Dr. Coleman's research team. From the outset, my responsibilities as a team member were clear:

1) share in generation of the theoretical framework for the study
2) provide input to the construction of survey instruments and interview schedules
3) serve as a liaison and contact person for the school district in which I worked, and for individual schools and teachers in that district
4) facilitate the establishment of appropriate reference groups of teachers, parents, and students
5) administer the distribution and collection of survey instruments
6) conduct interviews
7) forward all data to Dr. Coleman's research office
8) facilitate training sessions for teachers and parents
9) assist in data analysis and interpretation
10) assist in the preparation of an annotated bibliography of research related to parent involvement

By fulfilling the obligations outlined above I would gain access to all data collected by the research team, as well as to the results of statistical analyses conducted by Dr. Coleman and others. I could then use the data generated by the larger research effort as a basis for the investigation central to my thesis, as framed by the research questions described below. This, at least, was my plan as I began my involvement as a team member in the larger research project.

THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH FOCUS

As a component of the larger research project, the original focus of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and variables related to parent involvement, based on an analysis of the first set of data collected. Teacher sense of efficacy was viewed from the outset as one of the "critical variables" identified by research to be associated with collaborative home-school relationships.
and levels of parent involvement (Ashton, Webb, and Doda, 1983; Ashton and Webb, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie, 1987) and is one of six teacher scales summarized by Coleman et al. in the preceding diagram. Following Armor, Conroy-Osequera, Cox, King, McDonnel, Pascal, Pauly, and Zellman (1976) and Dembo and Gibson (1985), Likert-type survey items were to be used to measure sense of efficacy of participating teachers. Quantitative analysis of teacher, student, and parent data would then provide the opportunity to relate teacher sense of efficacy to other variables included in the theoretical framework. In addition, qualitative analysis of the teacher interviews would provide insight into the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of teachers with respect to parent involvement issues, and allow for further investigation of the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and parent involvement through a linking of the qualitative and quantitative results. The information generated by these analyses and the linking of the qualitative and quantitative data, as well as a thorough review of the teacher efficacy and parent involvement literature, would allow for the consideration of the following two main research questions.

First, what relationship exists between teacher sense of efficacy and teacher perceptions, attitudes, and practices of parent involvement? Given the findings of the small amount of research on teacher sense of efficacy, it seems reasonable to expect some sort of connection between these two domains. It is unlikely, for example, that a high efficacy teacher would view a request for parental assistance as an admission of failure, of an inability teach effectively. Rather, the high efficacy teacher would be more likely to see parents as an effective, easily accessible resource for enhancing or assisting in their child's learning. A low
efficacy teacher, in contrast, might view teacher-parent collaboration as threatening, and have more negative attitudes about it. Will those teachers identified by the quantitative data as lower in their sense of efficacy view and practice parent involvement differently than their higher efficacy colleagues? An answer to this question could be provided through a qualitative analysis.

Second, what linkages exist between teacher sense of efficacy and other variables believed to mediate the collaborative relationship between teachers, parents, and students? Parents, for instance, may tend to become more involved if they perceive that teachers view their involvement as something worthwhile, something to be concerned about, and something to be encouraged. Do high efficacy teachers, teachers who believe they really make a difference to their students' learning, communicate to parents the idea that they can make a difference too, and that they want them to help? Is there a connection between teacher efficacy and parent perception of teacher concern for parent involvement? To provide a second example, Williams and Chavkin (1989) suggest that clear lines of communication between school and home are an essential prerequisite for successful home school collaboration. The teacher's willingness to establish two-way communication links between home and school is likely to be an important factor in influencing the type and frequency of communication which takes place. It seems reasonable to suggest that parents dealing with high as opposed to low efficacy teachers will have different perceptions of the nature of teacher-parent communications. These are but two examples of the sorts of linkages between teacher sense of efficacy and the other variables being
investigated which it is expected that exploration of this question may establish.

**RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY**

That teacher sense of efficacy and parent involvement are interrelated was first suggested by Ashton, Webb, and Doda (1983), who concluded that a "major source of teachers' inefficacy is their relations with the families of low-achieving students" (p. 27). Negative experiences in attempting to involve parents in their child's education reduced the sense of efficacy of teachers they studied, with the consequence that these teachers limited their involvement with parents to reduce the risk of this sense of efficacy loss occurring again.

Strong connections between teacher efficacy and parent involvement were next suggested in the findings of a study by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1982), which attempted to correlate varying levels of parent involvement in different schools with differences in school and teacher characteristics. Of the eight factors investigated by these researchers, teacher efficacy was the variable which most consistently predicted parent involvement outcomes.

Curiously, despite the fact these findings suggest that teacher efficacy is a significant predictor of the degree of home-school collaboration, there is no evidence in the literature of any further research relating the two. Though much has been written recently about different aspects of parent involvement, the reciprocal relationship it seems to share with teacher efficacy appears to have been largely overlooked. Research contributing to a broader understanding of the relationship between teacher efficacy and parent involvement would
therefore seem to be a useful addition to our current understanding of ways in which teachers and parents interact, and may serve to point the way to strategies for enhancing levels of parent participation in their children's education.

A SHIFT IN FOCUS: RECONCEPTUALIZING THE RESEARCH TASK

Research in the social sciences is not always a tidy, predictable venture. This proposition is clearly illustrated in a number of the essays collected in Phillip Hammond’s book on social science research methods, Sociologists at Work (1964). One of the themes emerging from this book relates to the tension arising from the relationship between original theory and actual research, which Hammond, quoting Shils, suggests can often be characterized as "a disorderly movement . . . full of instances of things known and overlooked, unexpected emergencies, and rediscoveries of long known facts and hypotheses" (p. 2). James Coleman's description of the research which led to the publication of the The Adolescent Society is a case in point. Coleman (1964) describes the "disorientation" he experienced when, after all the data in his study had been collected and analysis begun, it seemed that "none of the variables . . . was turning out right" (p. 198). Though "the research had been well planned, (and) the hypotheses were clear" (p. 198), the data would not support the analysis as originally conceived, and he discusses at some length the "transformation" which occurred in his conceptualization of the research task as he shifted and broadened the focus of his study.

The manner in which the research design for this study was implemented is described in detail in "Chapter 3", but needs to be dealt with briefly at this point to clarify why a reconceptualization of the
specific focus of this thesis was required. Data collection instruments were prepared by the research team in the early fall of 1990, at the same time as the schools, teachers, and families comprising the research sample were being identified. By late fall, 1990, the instruments were ready, the sample identified, and the first round of data collection (Time 1) had occurred. Separate training sessions for parents and teachers, focusing on strategies for enhancing home-school collaboration, were held in January, 1991, and a second round of data collection (Time 2) occurred in late May and early June of that year. The Time 1 interviews were transcribed that spring, and the research team met in the summer of 1991 to generate a master coding sheet to lay the basis for a qualitative analysis of the interview data. During the latter part of the summer, Time 1 teacher, parent, and student interviews from the first round of data collection were coded by team members using this master code list.

Analysis of the Time 1 quantitative data began early in 1991, following the first round of data collection, first to demonstrate the internal consistency of the scales used in the teacher, parent, and student surveys, then to establish linkages among the variables, and ultimately to support a model of causal relationships. By the fall of 1991, it was clear that the first round parent data and student data showed clear internal relationships between a number of the scales, and were linked to one another by a significant association between the student scale measuring student teacher collaboration and the parent scale measuring parent perception of teacher concern about parent involvement. (See Coleman, Collinge, and Seifert, 1992, for a detailed discussion of the quantitative analysis and the relationship among
parent and student scales.) However, quantitative analysis indicated
none of the teacher scales could be linked in a statistically significant
way to any of the parent or student scales (Coleman, November, 1992, in
an oral report to Site 1 research team members). Additionally, though
the teacher scales showed good internal consistency, none could be
reliably used to distinguish between classrooms. (This finding is reported
in more detail in Col'inge and Coleman, 1992, p. 15.) Consequently, in
the fall of 1991 it became clear that the data would not support an
investigation of either of the two focuses of my study as originally
conceived: the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and
teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent
involvement; and the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and
the parent and student variables which mediate collaborative home
school relationships.

Prior to learning that the results of the quantitative analysis would
require me to reconceptualize the research task on which I had
embarked, I had already completed a substantial amount of work. First,
during the summer of 1991 I conducted an extensive review of the
literature related to teacher efficacy and to parent involvement. The
results of that literature review are reported in "Chapter 2". Second, by
working with Dr. Coleman and other members of the research team and
through independent reading during that same summer, I had learned a
considerable amount regarding qualitative analysis. The desire to use
this knowledge encouraged me to determine a new research focus which
could be approached largely through qualitative analysis.
NEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On the advice of Dr. Coleman, my senior supervisor, I undertook to answer a number of research questions closely related to my original focus, but which emphasized teacher perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement without specific reference to teacher sense of efficacy as a mediating variable.

First, what are the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers regarding parent involvement?

Second, in matters related to parent involvement, what changes occurred in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers during the first year of the study?

Providing an answer to the first question would be useful for several reasons. First, if one of the purposes of the larger research project is to develop, through interventions, a more collaborative relationship between teachers and parents, it is important to establish what current teacher perceptions, attitudes, and practices of parent involvement are. Establishing what these perceptions, attitudes, and practices are will provide a logical starting point from which appropriate interventions can be planned. Second, though much can be surmised from American and British research on teacher attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement, there has been little research conducted in this field with Canadian, and even more specifically, British Columbian teachers. The findings resulting from an investigation of this question may serve to validate research findings in other countries as being applicable here, or point a new direction for Canadian researchers.

Answering the second question would help set the stage for an analysis of the Time 2 parent and student data. It might also provide a
potential route for linking the teacher, parent, and student data. For instance, if a qualitative analysis of Time 2 teacher interviews reveals classrooms where significant changes have occurred in teacher perceptions, attitudes, or practices regarding parent involvement, and those changes are reflected by corresponding variations in the parent and student scale scores for that classroom, then, by linking qualitative and quantitative findings, there may be a way to connect the three different reference groups and complete a triad analysis related to home school collaboration.

Qualitative methods would be used to investigate both questions. Time 1 teacher interviews would be used as the data source for establishing existing teacher perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement. Time 2 interviews would provide information regarding what, if any, changes had occurred in areas related to parent involvement.

This reconceptualization of the original research task was necessitated by the unanticipated results arising from the analysis of the Time 1 survey data. Nevertheless, the information provided by the investigation of these research questions should advance the larger research project in two ways. It should facilitate the planning of appropriate, effective interventions, and it should provide insights to assist in the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

**Definition of Terms**

Parent involvement is a general term, and like all such terms, may hold different meanings for different people. There is a recognition in the literature (Epstein, 1988; Fullan, 1982; Gordon, 1977; Henderson,
Marburger, and Ooms, 1986; Williams and Chavkin, 1989) that parent involvement takes a variety of forms, ranging from something as broad as generalized home support for school and classroom goals to something as specific as parent involvement in home instruction programs. Epstein, a leading researcher in the field of parent involvement, has categorized parent involvement into five main types (Epstein, 1988). These include what she calls the "basic obligations" of parents - the duty to provide the positive home conditions likely to support learning and appropriate school behaviour. The second type of parent involvement relates to the obligation of schools to provide for clear, frequent, and varied forms of communication with parents. Parents volunteering at the school or supporting different school endeavours constitutes another category of involvement, as does parent involvement in learning activities in the home. Finally, parents can become involved in advocacy and decision-making at the school or district level. When used in its most general sense, the term parent involvement may refer to any of these behaviours. For the purposes of this study, however, parent involvement refers to those collaborative endeavours between teachers and parents related to instructional activities and student achievement, occurring either in the school, home, or community environment. The terms "home-school collaboration" and "collaborative home-school relationship", when used in this paper, refers to the same activities as "parent involvement".

Researchers have identified teacher sense of efficacy as a factor which affects a variety of educational outcomes, including parent involvement. Although there is some debate as to exactly how the construct should be defined (Dembo and Gibson, 1985), it is generally
agreed that teacher sense of efficacy means the extent to which teachers believe they can influence student learning. Conceptualizations of teacher efficacy suggest the construct is dependent on a broad range of antecedent conditions, and that it entails two separate dimensions. The first describes the way in which a teacher perceives the ability of teachers in general to influence learning in students, that is, "a sense of the likelihood that the ideal or normative teacher can bring about positive changes" (Denham and Michael, 1981). The second dimension relates to the way an individual perceives his or her personal ability to influence student learning. In other words, how effective is he or she personally as a teacher. Taken together, these dimensions make up the concept teacher sense of efficacy (Denham and Michael, 1981; Ashton, Webb, and Doda, 1983; Dembo and Gibson, 1984).

**STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS**

This first chapter has identified and justified the questions this thesis will investigate, and set them in the context of the larger research project. The second chapter reviews the parent involvement and teacher efficacy literature, and draws connections between the two. "Chapter 3" details the methodology used to investigate the research questions, and "Chapter 4" articulates the findings of this investigation. The final chapter relates the findings to existing research, and to the findings of other researchers involved in the Co-Production of Learning project. It presents suggestions for further research and details a number of implications for teachers and administrators resulting from the findings.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND TEACHER EFFICACY: INTRODUCTION

A good deal of educational research in the last two decades has focussed on identifying and understanding the multitude of factors which cause some schools and some teachers to be more effective than others. Reviews of the research on school and teacher effectiveness reveal that many factors in both the school and home environment are at play, and that these factors interact with one another in a variety of complex ways to create the sum total of the educational experience.

Parent involvement in instruction is a topic receiving a considerable amount of attention in recent literature. Common sense suggests that the quality of a child's education can be enhanced if parents and teachers work together to achieve shared goals. Not surprisingly, research findings are generally consistent in indicating a positive correlation between parent involvement and student achievement (Barth, 1979; Conrad and Eash, 1983; Epstein, 1984; Fehrman et al., 1987; Henderson, 1987; Lyons et al., 1983; and Walberg, 1984). Indeed, when teachers and parents work together in instruction-related activities the benefits extend beyond gains in achievement to improvement in attitudes, behaviour, and school climate. (Epstein, 1987; Haynes, Comer, and Hamilton-Lee, 1987)

Recent work by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) attempted to establish the relative contribution of a variety of school and teacher characteristics with respect to their effect on potential levels of parent involvement. The researchers examined a range of variables identified in the literature as affecting levels of parent involvement. Of the nine such
factors evaluated in this study, far and away the most powerful predictor of the level of parent involvement was teacher efficacy. The relationship between teacher efficacy and levels of parent involvement is also suggested in earlier work by Ashton and Webb (1986).

The research cited in the preceding paragraph establishes a definite connection between teacher efficacy and parent involvement. This chapter examines the literature related to these concepts, and explores what is known regarding the connection between the two. For clarity, the literature related to parent involvement is discussed first, followed by that related to teacher efficacy.

THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT LITERATURE

Forms of Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in education takes a variety of forms, ranging from attendance at school functions, through participation in school advisory councils, volunteering in the classroom, and working with children in instructional activities at home. Fullan (1982) has classified parent involvement as being one of four types: involvement in instruction, governance, home-school relations, and community service. Epstein (in Brandt, 1989) provides a different categorization, viewing parent involvement as activities related to the basic obligations of parents and schools, and parental involvement at school, in learning activities in the home, and in governance and advocacy. Other authors (Moles, 1987; Chavkin and Williams, 1987) use different terms to discuss parent involvement roles, but the categorizations they provide are essentially similar. Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1986) provide a simpler model, categorizing parent involvement activities as one of two
types: those "aimed directly at strengthening the overall school program, and only indirectly to helping the parent's own child" and those "directly aimed at assisting one's own child" (p. 110).

**The Case for Parent Involvement**

The case for parent involvement in the educational process has been made in different ways by a variety of authors. Some, like Comer (1986) and Hobbs (1978), base their conclusions on a general analysis of changing social dynamics within our society. Comer suggests that in the last three or four decades our society has undergone changes which have caused educators to lose "much of the power they once had to significantly influence the social and psychological development of students as they address their intellectual development" (p. 443). Direct parent participation in education is, he says, one of the institutional adjustments which will have to be made to rectify the resulting deficiencies. In a similar vein, Hobbs outlines the schism that has developed between school and home and argues that "a new alliance between family and school . . . can be a source of revitalization for the schools and of enhanced educational effectiveness (p. 765).

Other researchers have looked more directly at the educational impact of parent involvement, in terms of increasing student achievement and improving the attitudes of parents, teachers, and students. Epstein (1987), for example, focuses on the existing research and cites a range of literature reviews on the subject of parent involvement. She concludes that "the evidence is clear that parent encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievement, attitudes, and,
aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status have been taken into account" (p. 120). Similarly, Fullan (1982) concludes that the message emerging from twenty years' literature on parent involvement is "remarkable in its consistency: the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement" (p. 193). Henderson's (1988) review of parent involvement studies leads her to assert that "it is clear that everyone benefits when parents are involved in their children's education" (p. 150). Johnston and Slotnik (1985), Moles (1982), Walberg (1984), Barth (1979), and Gordon (1979) also speak for the positive effects of parent involvement in school and school related activities on children's attitudes and achievement.

Though the literature is consistent in suggesting that all forms of parent involvement in education provide benefits in one way or other, it is direct parent involvement in instructional activities which has the greatest benefits for student achievement (Epstein, 1987). Fullan concurs, suggesting that "there is little evidence to suggest that other non-instructional forms of parent involvement directly affect student learning in the school" (1982, p. 200). For this reason, the types of parent involvement focussed on in this review of the literature are those related to collaborative endeavours between teachers and parents and associated with instructional activities and student achievement, occurring either in the school, home, or community environment.

Children benefit both in terms of increased achievement and the development of positive attitudes toward school when parents are involved. Walberg (1984) reviewed twenty-nine parent involvement studies, and notes that programs designed to help parents attend to
academic issues in the home "have an outstanding record of success in promoting achievement" (p.399-400). Fehrman, Keith, and Reimers (1987), in a major study of high school students, found a direct, positive relationship between levels of parent involvement and students' grades. Phillips and Rosenberger (1983) conducted research indicating "academic achievement of students can be increased as much as 35% with parent involvement" (p.33). Barth (1979) reports that significant gains in student performance resulted from a program involving parents in instructional activities at home.

Epstein's (1987) research supports the conclusion that students benefit in terms of enhanced academic achievement, but goes further to suggest that there are significant attitudinal gains as well. Henderson (1988) asserts that in addition to the "aggregate effect on the performance of students and teachers when schools collaborate with parents," research shows that "individual children and their families function more effectively" (p. 150). Lyons et al. (1983) argue that "Students whose parents help them at home not only learn more, but have more positive attitudes toward learning. Attendance is better, students feel more comfortable with class work, and they come to school with greater confidence" (p. 49). Comer (1986) and Zeigler (1987) suggest that when parents become involved in educational activities, behavioural and attitudinal expectations are reinforced, strengthening the bonds between the child and the educational process. This "bonding" concept is developed by Finn (1989), who cites research which shows that families who explicitly reinforce the same goals emphasized by the school facilitate in their children "participation" and "identification" within the school context. By increasing students' sense of bonding to the
schooling process, parent involvement may make it less likely students will choose to withdraw or drop out.

The literature provides ample evidence that the benefits of parent involvement extend to teachers and schools as well. Epstein (1986, 1987) reports that teachers who initiated more frequent school-home communication and involved parents more often in instruction at home received higher ratings in the areas of interpersonal skills and overall teacher quality. Higher levels of teacher efficacy were associated with increased parent involvement in a study by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987). Rosenholtz reports that "teachers' certainty about a technical culture and their own instructional practice" increases when schools "enable parents to help their child at home, to participate in teachers' instructional programs, and to become better informed about their children's progress" (1989, p. 114). Haynes et al. (1987) demonstrated that schools which work systematically to involve parents have "considerably enhanced" ratings of classroom and school climate than schools which do not. These findings support the conclusion that increased levels of parent involvement are a significant contributing factor to parent rating of school, as well as to the sense of satisfaction teachers derive from their job.

The advantages to children, teachers, and schools resulting from increased levels of parent involvement are well documented, and surveys indicate there is recognition on the part of teachers and administrators that more parent involvement is needed. Ninety percent of teachers polled in an American nationwide survey favoured greater collaboration with parents (Moles, 1982). Chavkin and Williams (1987) surveyed parents, district administrators, and school board presidents in six
states and found considerable agreement on statements supporting increased parent involvement in traditional roles (e.g. home tutor). (Interestingly, the researchers found much less agreement regarding the role of parents in school governance, with administrators being decidedly unenthusiastic about the concept.)

**Obstacles to Parent Involvement**

Despite the apparent recognition of the benefits of and desire for increased parent involvement in instructional roles, many schools and teachers do little to strengthen the connection with parents. They may "pay lip service to the importance of parent participation, but don't give parents the opportunity to play a meaningful role (Comer, 1986, p. 444). Epstein (1986, 1987) investigated teacher-parent communication practices and found a surprisingly large number of parents had little or no substantive communication with their child's teacher over the course of the school year. More than one in three parents had no conference with the teacher and, although the vast majority (95%) of teachers reported that they communicated with the parents of their students, parent responses indicated that almost two-thirds had not talked with their child's teacher over the phone.

Because home school-partnerships work to produce such significant academic and attitudinal effects, one is led to wonder what barriers keep them from becoming an important component of every school's and every teacher's program. Fullan (1982) suggests that factors contributing to the lack of parent participation are either "phenomenological" or "logistical". Phenomenological barriers "relate to the lack of knowledge and understanding that administrators and parents have of each others'
subjective worlds." Logistical barriers, on the other hand, "concern lack of time, opportunity, and know-how about what activities or forms of parent involvement would be most effective" (p. 203).

In *World's Apart* (1978), Lightfoot details many of the phenomenological barriers between families and schools. A significant problem is the conflict between the parents' concern for the individual child and the school's tendency to emphasize group process and progress, resulting in a mutual perception of distrust and lack of consideration. Becker and Epstein's (1982) survey of teachers' practices of parent involvement also supports Fullan's observations. Teachers cited logistical problems (lack of time to plan programs and communicate with parents) and phenomenological ones (questions about the appropriateness of school work in the home setting). Moles (1982) synthesis of the research adds further support: for parents, the "competing demands of work and family life" and "different cultural backgrounds" inhibit involvement; similarly, for teachers, the "competing demands at home and school", a "lack of training for dealing with parents", and cultural factors reduce the probability of strong home-school connections. These barriers to parent involvement are further developed in Moles' later work (1987) when he asserts that "the skills of parents and teachers for working together are not well developed, that some mistrust of each other . . . is present, and that parents often feel they lack certain skills needed to help educate children (p. 144).

In other cases, teachers may feel threatened that when parents become closely involved in their child's program they may begin passing judgement or wanting to have a controlling say. A chronic problem for teachers is the "endemic uncertainty" and the concerns they experience
regarding their effectiveness (Lortie, 1975). Since a "major source of teachers' low efficacy" is their interactions with the parents of low-achieving students (Ashton and Webb, 1986), teachers may seek to limit interactions which they view as essentially negative. Alden (1978) suggests that parents seldom pass judgement or want to set the agenda, but desire a direct, helping involvement in what their child is learning. There may, however, be some legitimacy to teachers' concerns in this area given Power's (1985) finding that some parents "felt that teachers were less competent than teachers believed themselves to be" (quoted in Collinge and Coleman, 1992, p. 2).

**Parent Involvement Programs**

Despite the existence of factors which may limit parent involvement, the literature contains many references to successful parent involvement programs. The work of Barth (1979), Walberg (1984), Fehrman et al. (1987), Comer (1984), Comer and Haynes (1991), discussed previously, detail widely varying examples of such programs. Epstein (1991) provides a general overview of American parent involvement programs at national, state, district, and school levels, drawing conclusions regarding their contribution to school effectiveness and outlining examples of practice which could be easily adopted by other programs. A series of parent involvement projects operating under "Chapter 1" legislative regulations in the United States are discussed by D'Angelo and Adler (1991), who conclude that these programs achieved success by "following some variation of a basic recipe: combine the needs of a specific parent audience with with creative ideas for generating activities, and blend in an understanding of good communication"
(1991). Davies (1991) reviews programs exemplifying a range of approaches to parent involvement, concluding that all possess three centrally important "common themes": they provide "success for all children", serve "the whole child", and believe that the "social, emotional, physical, and academic of the child is a shared and overlapping responsibility of the school, the family, and other community agencies and institutions" (p. 377). The appropriate recognition of student achievement and constant communication are the cornerstones of a parent involvement program discussed by Davis and Thomas (1989). An English parent involvement program for children in their first years of school which also emphasized communication strategies is reported by Dye (1991), who details the positive effects the program had on student achievement and parent and teacher attitudes. One finding which seems consistent in these reviews of parent involvement programs is that effective communication strategies are a vital factor in ensuring the success of any initiative.

THE TEACHER EFFICACY LITERATURE

Like parent involvement, teacher efficacy is a variable linked to student achievement and a range of other outcomes generally associated with educator effectiveness (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Ashton and Webb, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Smylie, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). Unlike parent involvement, however, it has received only a small amount of attention in the professional literature. This is somewhat surprising, especially when one considers the positive outcomes research has associated with higher levels of
teacher efficacy: the use of more effective teaching strategies, an increased willingness to collaborate with peers, a greater propensity to accept and implement change, and a tendency to establish more positive and productive relationships with both students and parents.

**Development of the Construct**

Generally speaking, teacher sense of efficacy refers to the beliefs teachers have regarding the degree to which students are capable of learning and to which they, as individuals, are capable of teaching those students: essentially, how effective they believe they can be, or are, as teachers. Although it wasn't until the late 1970's that teacher sense of efficacy attracted the attention of researchers as a discrete, identifiable variable which could be linked to a range of significant educational outcomes, earlier work certainly pointed to the importance of a teacher's belief in his/her own effectiveness.

Barfield and Burlingame (1974) adapted a scale used to measure political efficacy, and applied it to teachers in research designed to investigate variations in strategies used to control students. Their results indicated that teachers who scored highly on the scale tended towards less rigid forms of management than those teachers with low scores.

Dan Lortie's 1975 book *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, "one of the most respected and widely quoted studies of what teachers do and think" (Fullan, 1991, p. 119), makes frequent mention of teachers' concern with their effectiveness and of the "psychic rewards" teachers receive when they think they have been effective. Lortie refers to the "endemic uncertainties" regarding effectiveness experienced by most, if
not all teachers, which "complicate the teaching craft and hamper the earning of psychic rewards" (p. 159). Teachers describe "good days" in terms of "getting through to the students, finishing one's plans, and effective teaching" (p. 172). The teachers in Lortie's study, preoccupied as they were with classroom rather than organizational concerns, talked "largely about efforts to get and hold student attention and their attempts to permeate student awareness" (p. 174), comments which point to a keen concern regarding their individual efficacy. Indeed, almost two-thirds (64%) said they had trouble in assessing their work, and another two-thirds of this group described the problem as "serious" (p. 142).

Lortie calls for more research in this area, suggesting that "the problem of the scope of a teacher's effectiveness . . . deserves considerably closer inquiry than it has received" (p. 148). By examining how teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness, both as individuals and as a profession, is linked to other significant outcomes, the subsequent research on teacher sense of efficacy appears to answer at least a part of Lortie's call.

The results of two studies funded by the Rand Corporation in the latter half of the 1970's drew researchers' attention to the construct of teacher efficacy as a variable which might have a significant impact on a range educational outcomes, including student achievement and teachers' willingness to implement change.

The first of these studies (Armor et al., 1976) examined the effectiveness of the School Preferred Reading Program in Los Angeles. Armor et al. found that there was a close positive relationship between the teacher's sense of efficacy and their students' advances in reading achievement.
The second study (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, and Zellman, 1977) evaluated 100 Title III ESEA projects, and found teacher sense of efficacy to be one of the best predictors of the dependent variables examined by the study: improvement in student performance, the extent of teacher change, the percentage of project goals achieved, and teachers' maintenance of the innovation.

In both of these studies, teachers' sense of efficacy was measured by the total score attained from two Likert Scale items:

1. "When it comes right down to it a teacher can't do much, because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment."

2. "If I really try hard I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students." (Berman et al., 1977, p. 136-137)

Teachers' scores on these items were combined arrive at a single measure.

Curiously, despite the encouraging results of the Rand Corporation studies in demonstrating the predictive power of the concept of teachers' sense of efficacy, the findings did not appear to generate a great deal of interest in the educational research community. It was not until the early 1980's that more work specifically related to the concept of teacher efficacy was published. The thrust of this work was to elaborate and more clearly define the construct of teacher efficacy and to point directions for future research.

Bandura's work on self-efficacy was an important influence in subsequent formulations of the concept of teacher efficacy. In "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change" (1977), Bandura postulated that two variables play a key role in influencing a person's behavior. Life experiences contribute to an individual's
generalized beliefs regarding "response-outcome expectancies", that is, that certain behaviors are likely to bring about certain outcomes. Individuals also develop beliefs regarding their own abilities, and whether or not they are able to perform the actions necessary to bring about the outcomes they desire. Bandura summarizes the differences between the two expectancy beliefs as follows:

An outcome expectancy is defined as a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes. (p. 193)

The models of teachers’ sense of efficacy discussed below clearly reflect the influence of Bandura’s work, and his contribution is acknowledged by these authors.

Building on the findings of the two Rand Corporation studies, Bandura’s work, and a multi-disciplinary analysis of motivation, attribution, and expectation theory, Denham and Michael (1981) presented a conceptualization of teacher efficacy which entailed both an affective and cognitive component. The interplay of two beliefs related to general and personal teaching effectiveness resulted in the cognitive component of teacher efficacy. Specifically, an individual’s assessment of

1) "The extent to which the teacher believes that the ideal or normative teacher can bring about positive changes in given students under given circumstances," and
2) "The extent to which the teacher believes that he himself can bring about positive changes in given students under given circumstances."

defined the cognitive component of sense of teaching efficacy. The affective component resulted from how closely the individual teacher’s sense of his own effectiveness matched that of the ideal or normative teacher. Denham and Michael suggested that pride or shame would
result, depending on the congruence between the individual's assessment of his own abilities and those characterizing the ideal teacher. With respect to the nature of the cognitive and affective components of sense of efficacy, Denham and Michael suggested they could be thought of as existing along three dimensions: generality (the degree to which a teacher's sense of efficacy is relevant in a variety of different teaching situations); magnitude (the difficulty level of tasks for which an individual maintains a positive sense of efficacy); and strength (the extent to which sense of efficacy resists modification through variations in experience). They proposed the following model as representing the construct.

![Diagram of the model](image)

**Figure 2. A Model for the Study of Teachers Sense of Efficacy (Denham and Michael, 1981)**
Denham and Michael hypothesized that teacher efficacy was a variable intervening between a range of antecedent conditions and measurable outcomes traditionally linked by educational researchers. They grouped the antecedent conditions into five categories: teacher training; teaching experiences; system variables such as recognition, support from peers or administrators, participation in decision making; personal variables like self concept, need for achievement, and sex; and causal attributions, either internal or external, which are generated by individuals to explain their experiences. Measurable outcomes, on the other hand, related to four categories of teacher behaviours (classroom behaviours, support of innovation, professional activities, and remaining in the profession) and three categories of student behaviour (achievement outcomes, affective outcomes, and behavioural outcomes. Teacher efficacy was, these researchers suggested, a significant mediating variable in the relationship between antecedent conditions and measurable outcomes.

One significant aspect of Denham and Michael's hypothesis is that the relationship between the components of the model is reciprocal in nature. Causality flows in more than one direction, with teacher sense of efficacy both affecting and being affected by the antecedent conditions and measurable outcomes they propose. The element of bidirectional determinism is also present in later conceptualizations of teacher efficacy.

One problem with the model proposed by Denham and Michael is that, in attempting to present an inclusive conceptualization of sense of efficacy, it combines what might be considered as two essentially different, and not necessarily related, constructs. An individual's beliefs
regarding how effective teachers in general are at educating students may have little correlation with that one individual’s assessment of his or her own effectiveness as a teacher. This is problematic because one measure, sense of efficacy, is being used to describe two quite different phenomena. Both are related, of course, to the general concept of efficacy, but the connection between the two is not clear. Other researchers would address this problem in different ways.

The work of Patricia Ashton and her colleagues at the University of Florida (Ashton, Webb, and Doda 1983; Ashton, Burr, and Crocker, 1984; and Ashton and Webb, 1986) provides the most comprehensive exploration and analysis of the concept of teacher efficacy in the literature. Their research had a threefold focus: to develop a conceptual framework to explain the nature of efficacy attitudes in teachers, to suggest how these attitudes are shaped by antecedent factors, and to identify a relationship between efficacy attitudes and teacher behavior.

Ashton et al. first conducted an extensive multi-disciplinary literature review which helped them generate a preliminary conceptual framework to explain teacher sense of efficacy. Guided by this framework, they then developed a number of research studies to more closely examine the nature of teacher efficacy. They investigated

1) factors that facilitate and inhibit the development of a sense of efficacy in teachers
2) teacher behaviours that are associated with their sense of efficacy
3) effects of teachers' sense of efficacy on students, other teachers, and other aspects of the school environment

Ashton et al. conceptualize the construct of teachers' sense of efficacy as "teachers' situation-specific expectation that they can help
students learn" (1986, p. 3). This expectation rests both on the beliefs teachers have about how capable students are of learning what schools teach as well as the individual teacher's perception of his own teaching abilities. This conceptualization reflects Denham and Michael's (1981) distinction between the two phenomena that make up the cognitive component of teacher sense of efficacy, but Ashton et al. are much more specific in distinguishing between these two dimensions. Unlike Denham and Michael's hypothesis, there is no affective component in the conceptualization provided by Ashton et al. Teachers' sense of personal teaching efficacy results from the integration of the more general sense of teaching efficacy and self-efficacy beliefs.

Another similarity between Denham and Michael's work and Ashton's is that both acknowledge the influence of the individual's more general beliefs regarding the extent to which personal actions are likely to affect outcomes in determining sense of efficacy. In Denham and Michael's model these beliefs are an antecedent condition which could be subsumed under the categories "Personal Variables" or "Causal Attributions". In Ashton's conceptual framework, these generalized beliefs about "response-outcome contingencies" interact reciprocally with sense of teaching efficacy and sense of personal teaching efficacy.

According to Ashton et al., sense of teaching efficacy refers to the attitudes teachers have regarding the effectiveness of teaching in general to cause student learning. Teachers with a high sense of teaching efficacy believe that all children are capable of learning, that teachers are capable of motivating students to learn, and that teacher-student interactions within the school setting are a potentially effective way of promoting this learning. Other factors, such as home environment, may exert an
influence on student learning, but these factors can be overcome or, at the very least, need not completely prevent children from learning. In contrast, teachers with a low sense of teaching efficacy believe that social and environmental factors are a more powerful influence on student learning than what happens in the classroom, and that for some children it makes little difference what a teacher does in school. Outside influences are too powerful for teachers to overcome, and for these students it is unlikely teaching will be effective under any circumstances. No teacher, regardless of skills, will be able to motivate children like this to learn. These are extreme positions, of course, and most teachers' sense of teaching efficacy falls somewhere in between.

Sense of personal teaching efficacy, on the other hand, refers to the individual assessments teachers make regarding their own competence to motivate and teach children. These assessments may or may not be different from their beliefs about what good teachers are capable of accomplishing. A teacher with a low sense of personal teaching efficacy is one who believes that, although teachers in general may be quite capable of teaching effectively, he or she lacks the skills to do so. Regardless of what the students are capable of learning, his or her own inabilities as a teacher preclude the likelihood that his efforts in the classroom will result in actual student learning. Teachers with a high sense of personal teaching efficacy, on the other hand, are confident in their ability to promote student learning.

Ashton and Weeb (1986) proposed the following model to illustrate their conceptualization of teacher sense of efficacy.
Figure 3. Teachers Sense of Efficacy: The Multi-Dimensional Construct. [Ashton and Webb, 1986]

The arrows in the model clearly indicate the reciprocal relationships between the different components in this efficacy structure. However, the model is perhaps less than complete in that it does not explicitly recognize as broad a range of antecedent conditions as Denham and Michael's model.

The idea that sense of teaching efficacy and sense of personal teaching efficacy are two separate but inter-related dimensions of the more inclusive construct of teacher's sense of efficacy is supported by research done by Dembo and Gibson (1984). These researchers devised a thirty item "Teacher Efficacy Scale", presented in a Likert-type format, which was designed to reflect the two different components of teacher efficacy suggested by the original Rand items. The scale was administered to 208 elementary school teachers. The results were subjected to a factor analysis, which yielded two factors that
corresponded to the sense of teaching efficacy and sense of personal teaching efficacy elements. Further to this, Gibson and Dembo completed a multi-trait multi-method analysis to determine whether teacher efficacy could be distinguished from verbal ability and flexibility, two other constructs shown to have a positive impact on student achievement. The results supported the proposition that teacher efficacy was indeed a construct "distinctively different" from the other two concepts considered.

Recent literature has adapted and somewhat broadened conceptualizations of teachers' sense of efficacy. Rosenholtz (1989) proposes "the social construct of teacher certainty" to explain, in part, how some schools are able to maintain motivated, committed teachers and demonstrate increased productivity, as measured by gains in student learning. Interestingly, she uses the terms "teachers' certainty" and "efficacy" interchangeably on occasion, to wit, "our knowledge of the ways in which teachers' certainty (or efficacy) affect student learning is in its infancy" (p. 105). Her analysis of the construct of teacher certainty is based on a qualitative analysis which mels

    teachers' task conceptions with threats to their self esteem, and the manner in which these ingredients may stir teacher sentiments about a technical culture, their own instructional practice, and the learning potential of their students. (p. 116)

The concepts Rosenholtz refers to in the preceding quotation are integral parts of the models of teacher efficacy discussed above, and it seems reasonable to suggest that many of the observations she makes regarding the nature of teacher certainty apply equally well to teachers' sense of efficacy.
Factors Influencing Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

In the efficacy models discussed in the previous section, teachers' sense of efficacy is viewed as a variable affected by a variety of influences or "antecedent conditions" (Denham and Michael, 1981), which interact with one another in a model of reciprocal causation. Denham and Michael categorized these antecedent conditions as being of five different types: teacher training, teaching experiences, system variables (e.g. career ladders, participation in decision making, messages from society), personal variables (e.g. self-concept, ethnic background, sex) and causal attributions for perceived experiences. The relationship between these variables is shown in Figure 2.

Ashton and Webb conceptualize the factors which influence teachers' sense of efficacy somewhat differently. Adapting Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the educational environment, which suggests a nested arrangement of four organizational influence structures, these authors conducted a search of the research literature to identify variables likely to impact teachers' sense of efficacy. The variables yielded by this research review are grouped under the increasingly inclusive categories: the microsystem (the teacher's immediate setting, usually the classroom); the mesosystem (the interrelations among elements in the workplace, typically the school); the exosystem (the formal and informal structures external to the school); and the macrosystem (social attitudes and basic cultural beliefs) (Ashton and Webb, 1986, p. 13-25). The following paragraphs briefly summarize what Ashton and Webb's research review indicate are likely to be significant variables affecting teachers' sense of efficacy.
Microsystem variables include factors related to student characteristics, teacher characteristics, class size, and activity structure within the class. Student characteristics like socioeconomic status, race, behaviour, and appearance, when taken together, shape teachers' expectations about student ability. Ashton and Webb suggest that these expectations "appear to be the single most influential characteristic affecting their (teachers') behavior" (p. 14) and quite clearly play a role in determining sense of efficacy. (See also Cooper and Good, 1983, and Smylie, 1988). Gender is a microsystem variable which research shows may be linked to whether teachers are more likely to attribute causes for failure to internal factors, thereby influencing perception of their own efficacy (Greenwood, Olejnik, and Parkay, 1990). The ideology of teachers, differences in their beliefs and values, is also likely to affect the manner in which they interact with children and parents (Lightfoot, 1978) and thereby have consequences for their sense of efficacy. Partly because teachers frequently work in isolation, they often have different conceptualizations of their role and of what defines good teaching (Little, 1982). Studies which have investigated the effect of different teacher role orientations, cited by Ashton and Webb, suggest that these orientations determine what teachers value in terms of student outcomes. Consequently, teachers' sense of efficacy is likely to be affected to the extent that teachers perceive their students are achieving desired outcomes. A common assumption among teachers is that it is easier to be more effective with smaller class sizes, although some research indicates that when class size is reduced improvements in certain areas are more in the mind of the teacher than in changes in students' behavior. One possible explanation is that smaller class sizes affect
teachers' sense of efficacy, which has a corresponding effect of improvement. Activity structure is the final microsystem variable identified by Ashton and Webb. Because some teachers' sense of efficacy is greater with smaller groups, this is likely to affect how they structure activities within the class. Research suggests that the type of activity structure chosen has significant implications for students' cognitive and affective development, as well as for teacher behavior (Stodolsky, 1984), and the possibility exists that there is a reciprocal interaction between teachers' sense of efficacy and choice of activity structure.

Mesosystem variables likely to have implications for teachers' sense of efficacy are a school's size and demographic characteristics, its norms and values, including those relating to collegial and principal-teacher relations, its decision-making structures, and its pattern of home-school relations. Citing Anderson's (1968) and Larkin's (1973) research on school size and demographic characteristics, Ashton and Webb suggest that teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness may be related to factors associated with the size of a school and the nature of the student population. This is also supported by more current research (Rosenholtz, 1989). Fuller, Wood, Rapoport, and Dornbusch (1982) suggest that teachers' efficacy can be affected by school organizational structures. Leacock's (1969) work, cited by Ashton and Webb, on the development of school culture implies that lower levels of efficacy can result from shared norms which identify certain groups of students as being less capable of learning. The importance of the school's cultural norms in shaping the perceptions of individual educators regarding their effectiveness and personal accountability has been made much more recently by other authors, among them Rosenholtz (1989) and Wehlage,
Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989). Following a review of research on collegial relations, Ashton and Webb conclude that "school structures that enhance teachers' opportunities for collegial interaction have a positive effect on teacher attitudes and student performance . . . (and) may bolster and sustain teachers' sense of efficacy" (p. 19). Little's (1982) findings with respect to the effects of collegiality support this. The dimensions of principal behavior identified by Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) and others, particularly those relating to principal-teacher relations and decision-making structures, have been shown to have an impact on overall school effectiveness. Teachers are affected by these behaviors, Ashton and Webb suggest, and the "moderating influence of teachers' sense of efficacy" (p.20) can play a role in school effectiveness.

Home-school relations is another mesosystem variable which affects and is affected by teachers' sense of efficacy. The communication problems which can occur when teachers deal with parents from different and unfamiliar backgrounds, either cultural or socioeconomic, may contribute to a lowered sense of efficacy, which in turn may affect a teacher's willingness to initiate similar communication in the future. Ashton and Webb conclude that "Ineffective relationships with parents pose a serious threat to teachers' sense of efficacy" (p.22). This theme is one of many developed by Epstein (1985) in her research on parent involvement.

Rosenholtz's (1989) research on teacher certainty points to many of the same mesosystem variables. Teacher collaboration is a powerful predictor of teacher certainty. Parent involvement in their children's learning was also found to be a significant variable, as was positive
feedback and student behavior coordinated at the school level. Together, these four factors accounted for sixty percent of the variance in teacher certainty (p. 114). As noted earlier, teacher certainty is a construct very similar to teachers' sense of efficacy.

While recognizing that "Many formal and informal social structures external to the school environment are potential influences on teachers' sense of efficacy" (p. 22), the exosystem variables identified by Ashton and Webb (1986) as having the most significant influence are the specific characteristics of the school district and judicial and legislative mandates. The list of district characteristics which are likely to impact teacher efficacy levels is fairly extensive, including labour relations policy and practice, decision-making structures, and district cultural norms. Coleman and LaRocque (1990), in a study of British Columbia school districts, identified six focuses which contributed to the development of a particular "ethos" in each of the districts they examined. Some districts in the sample clearly had a more "productive" ethos than others, which in turn strongly influenced a variety of district outcomes. Coleman and LaRocque conclude "Perhaps most importantly, productive ethos may contribute to teacher perceptions of self-efficacy of both the performance kind, and the organizational kind" (p. 191). Other exosystem variables are legislative and judicial mandates. Wise's (1979) warning regarding the threat legally mandated educational policy holds for teacher autonomy is noted. Other authors (Atkins, 1985) have commented on the "unintended side effects" of mandated legislative initiatives gone astray. Increased bureaucratization and the attendant restrictions of teacher autonomy may well be factors which affect teachers' sense of efficacy.
The final influence structure in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, the macrosystem, deals with the values and beliefs prevailing in the general culture. Macrosystem variables which Ashton and Webb identify as related to teachers' sense of efficacy are conceptions of the learner and conceptions of the role of education. Cultural beliefs about the learner, such as those which suggest that children from certain types of socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to exhibit patterns of low achievement, may influence a teacher's perception of how effective he/she is likely to be with that type of student (sense of efficacy), which in turn may affect the way the teacher interacts with those students. Similarly, a view of education which holds that those who are either unable or unwilling to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the education system must lack motivation or ability, or both, is not likely to prompt teachers to "engage in an analysis which might raise doubts about their efficacy as teachers" (p. 24).

Figure 4 presents an illustration of the variables which research suggests are influential in shaping teachers' sense of efficacy. It synthesizes the work of Ashton and Webb (1986) with that of other researchers (Rosenholtz, 1989; Coleman and LaRocque, 1990; and Coleman, 1991), who have identified additional variables related to educator effectiveness and, it seems reasonable to suggest, to the development of teachers' sense of efficacy.
Figure 4. Variables Influencing Teachers' Sense of Efficacy
Outcomes Linked to Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy is associated with student achievement levels (Armour et al., 1976; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson and Dembo, 1985; Ashton and Webb, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989), and a broad range of teacher behaviors and attitudes, such as willingness and ability to establish positive relationships with students (Ashton and Webb, 1986); a propensity to use techniques associated with instructional effectiveness (Dembo and Gibson, 1985; Ashton and Webb, 1986); a willingness to consult with and involve parents (Epstein, 1985; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987); to establish productive relationships with other teachers (Little, 1982); to accept and implement change (Fullan, 1982, 1991; Smylie, 1988); as well as with levels of teacher commitment (Rosenholtz, 1989), career satisfaction (McLaughlin and Yee, 1988), and stress (Greenwood, Olejnik, and Parkay, 1990).

The first connections between teacher efficacy and improved reading achievement were made, as noted earlier, by Armour et al. (1976) and Berman and McLaughlin (1977) in the two Rand Corporation studies. In both cases, researchers found that teacher's scores on the two Rand efficacy items were positively correlated with student gains in reading achievement. A later study of the effects of teacher efficacy levels involving high school basic skills mathematics and communications teachers produced "findings (which) strongly support the hypothesis that teachers' sense of efficacy is related to student achievement" (Ashton and Webb, 1986, p. 138). Including teachers' efficacy beliefs in the regression equations used for data analysis revealed that the variance accounted for increased by 24% and 46%, for math and language achievement respectively (p. 138). Basic skills classes were chosen for this study.
because the authors believed that the mediating influence of teachers' sense of efficacy would be more likely to have an impact in these kinds of teaching situations. Study results also reinforced Dembo and Gibson's (1984) findings that high efficacy teachers were more likely to employ instructional techniques related to gains in student achievement.

Another finding of this study was that the results pointed clearly to the situation-specific nature of teachers' sense of efficacy, supporting Bandura's (1977) conceptualization.

Earlier work by Ashton and Webb (1983) identified different behavior patterns for high and low efficacy teachers. In a study of middle and junior high school teachers, these authors found that high efficacy teachers were more likely to have clear expectations for students and routine procedures for enforcing these expectations; to demonstrate "withitness" with respect to what was occurring in the classroom; to keep students on task and stay on task themselves, and to establish positive, productive relationships with students.

Ashton and Webb (1986) integrated the data of the studies discussed above in an attempt to develop a composite portrait of the characteristics which distinguish high from low efficacy teachers. The authors found that high and low efficacy teachers could, to a certain extent, be differentiated in four different ways: their reaction to competency threats, the nature of the student-teacher relationships they established, their classroom management strategies, and their instructional strategies. Teachers' sense of efficacy was most noticeable as a predictor of the pattern of student-teacher relationships. These findings need to be treated with a considerable amount of caution, given the narrow range of the sample and the particular context, in which
many of the teachers worked, i.e. high school basic skills classes. Further work is needed to extend the generalizability of Ashton and Webb's conclusions.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) used classroom observation data related to academic focus, feedback patterns, and the willingness of teachers to persist in failure situations to attempt to determine whether high and low efficacy teachers behaved differently. Using teacher scores on a thirty item Likert type scale to identify high and low efficacy teachers, the researchers found that there were significant differences in the amount of time spent in certain activity structures, with high efficacy teachers spending almost twice as much time (48% vs 28%) in whole group instruction. In addition, high efficacy teachers were observed to spend more time monitoring and checking seatwork. Low efficacy teachers, on the other hand, were more likely to engage their students in intellectual games. Though noting that the results of the study should be viewed with caution because of the small number of teachers observed, the authors conclude that "teacher efficacy may influence certain patterns of classroom behaviour known to yield achievement gains" (p. 579). It is worth noting that Gibson and Dembo's findings are consistent with Ashton's and Webb's (1986).

Rosenholtz's (1989) work reaffirms and extends the findings of Gibson and Dembo (1984) and Ashton and Webb (1983, 1986). Her research examining students' reading and math achievement gains from second to fourth grade found positive correlations between teacher certainty (efficacy) and student learning. "Statistics testify just as eloquently as the qualitative data that teacher certainty makes a difference in students' mastery of basic skills" (p. 138). Rosenholtz also
predicted that teachers' sense of efficacy (certainty) was one of several key factors which influenced teachers' level of commitment to the workplace. She argued that "when teachers feel certain about their professional practices and know how to expand them, they devote themselves to greater instructional effort and involvement" (p. 142). Research conducted to test this proposition found that efficacy, or certainty, was indeed correlated with commitment, though it did not enter as an independent variable in the research equation. This was attributed to a limited sample size and shared variance between the independent variables. A more powerful predictor of commitment was "teachers' task autonomy and discretion - the sense that achieving work goals results directly from purposive actions, or teachers feeling that their own intentional efforts cause positive changes to occur" (p. 164). Described in these terms, task autonomy and discretion seem closely related to some aspects of teachers' sense of efficacy. Another outcome which Rosenholtz suggested resulted from higher efficacy (certainty) levels was an increased probability that teachers would communicate with parents and involve them in instructional activities. Teachers working in "nonroutine technical cultures" develop a belief of the effectiveness of the educational strategies they use and share with colleagues. These teachers "assume personal responsibility . . . which compels (them) to investigate the sources of student problems". They believe that they "can make positive things happen, by eliciting parent involvement" (p. 127).

The relationship between teacher efficacy levels and a willingness to engage parents in the educational process was demonstrated in other research (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 1987; Epstein, 1985). In a study which
tested whether variations in school setting were related to varying levels of parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey et al. found teacher efficacy and school socioeconomic status to be the two variables most strongly associated with parent involvement outcomes, with teacher efficacy being the most powerful predictor. The indicators used to assess parent involvement were those common to most elementary schools: parent-teacher conferences, volunteer work in the classroom, involvement in at-home tutoring and instructional programs, and teacher perceptions of support from parents. Teacher efficacy levels were measured differently than in most other studies, with individual scores being aggregated to the school level to arrive at a composite indicator which the researchers could use to distinguish between high and low efficacy schools.

Another outcome associated with variations in teacher efficacy levels is willingness to accept and implement change (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Fullan, 1982, 1991; Smylie, 1988). Berman and McLaughlin's study of the effectiveness of change-agent projects alerted researchers to the potency of teachers' sense of efficacy as a predictor of certain educational outcomes, particularly those related to change implementation and improved student performance. Their study revealed that the most effective predictor of the amount of teacher change was a teacher's score on the two Rand Likert items measuring efficacy (discussed above). In The Meaning of Educational Change (1982) and The New Meaning of Educational Change, Fullan synthesizes research related to change processes in education, and concludes that teacher efficacy is "one teacher trait related to successful implementation and student learning which comes through strongly" (1982, p. 72) and that "teachers' sense of efficacy is important in bringing about school
improvements" (1991, p. 167). Smylie (1988) tested the proposition that "the greater a teacher's personal teaching efficacy and certainty of practice, the more likely that teacher will be to change practice as a result of staff development" (p. 11). His results strongly supported the proposition, with path analysis showing a direct and robust connection between personal teaching efficacy and individual change.

The amount of stress experienced by teachers is another outcome research has directly connected with differences in teachers' sense of efficacy. Greenwood et al. (1990) identified four different teacher efficacy belief patterns based on the two components of teachers' sense of efficacy as measured by the Rand items, which can be summarized as follows: teachers can't, I can't; teachers can, I can't; teachers can't, I can; and teachers can, I can. Teachers whose efficacy scores placed them within the first pattern (teachers can't, I can't) had significantly higher stress scores. The authors conclude that "the findings indicate that teachers experience less stress when they have confidence in their abilities and believe that they, as well as teachers in general, can make a difference" (p. 106).

CONCLUSIONS: CONNECTING TEACHER EFFICACY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The preceding review of the research on teachers' sense of efficacy indicates that how teachers perceive their own abilities and those of their students can have direct, significant implications for student achievement and a range of other important outcomes associated with educator effectiveness. High-efficacy teachers are more likely to employ classroom strategies proven to be effective. They are more likely to
collaborate with peers, and they have a greater propensity to accept and implement change. High efficacy teachers tend to establish more positive and productive relationships with students and, finally, are more willing to engage in collaborative home-school relationships.

The literature also indicates that teachers' sense of efficacy is one of the variables in the "effective education" equation manipulable by those in school and district leadership positions. (Fuller et al., 1982; Ashton and Webb, 1986, Coleman and LaRocque, 1990). Clearly, then, one very general implication for practice is that educational leaders structure the organizational context within which teachers work so that, as far as possible, its design is one which is likely to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy. Encouraging and supporting initiatives to increase levels of parent involvement may be one strategy for accomplishing this goal.

The one consistent message coming from the literature on parent involvement is that it has the potential to generate significant benefits for children, parents, schools, and teachers. Students grow in increased achievement and positive attitudes. Parents benefit in terms of their tendency to develop more positive attitudes and to rate the schools their children attend more highly. Teachers who work closely with parents have an enhanced sense of their ability to be effective. Simply put, they feel increased confidence and competence.

Despite the reported benefits of parent involvement, research indicates most teachers do not involve parents in significant and meaningful ways. Many barriers to parent involvement exist, including logistical problems related to time and organizational factors, as well as
more general attitudinal obstacles and a lack of awareness on the part of both parents and teachers.

Nevertheless, many examples of successful parent involvement programs are reported in the literature. These programs provide models for other educators hoping to establish their own parent involvement programs, and make it clear that an increased level of parent involvement is an achievable goal.

Considering the literature, any well-conceived attempt to increase levels of parent involvement in a school or classroom would merit support. So would any program designed to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy. One question, then, which seems reasonable to pose at this point is whether an initiative in one of these areas might have corresponding benefits in the other? Is there anything in the literature to suggest that the answer to this question might be, "Yes"?

M. W. McLaughlin, one of the researchers involved in the original Rand studies which pointed to the predictive significance of the efficacy construct, provides in some of her more recent work a framework through which teacher efficacy and parent involvement practices and initiatives may be linked. Basing her analysis on educational and more general organizational research, McLaughlin has identified two factors which she suggests are critical to shaping "an individual's effectiveness, satisfaction, and growth", outcomes very closely aligned with enhanced efficacy levels (McLaughlin and Yee, 1988). McLaughlin and Yee label these factors "level of opportunity" and "level of capacity", and they refer respectively to "the chance to develop basic competence; the availability of stimulation, challenge, and feedback about performance, and the support for efforts to try new things and acquire new skills" (p. 26); and
to "teachers' access to resources and the ability to mobilize them, the availability of tools to do their job, and the capacity to influence the goals and directions of their institution" (p. 28).

Teachers whose work situations provide high levels of both opportunity and capacity "are enthusiastic about their work and are motivated to find ways to do even better" (p. 28) and "tend to pursue effectiveness in the classroom, express commitment to the organization, and report high levels of professional satisfaction" (p. 29). The connection is clear: work environments high in opportunity and capacity will be environments where teacher efficacy flourishes.

But how does this relate to parent involvement? Teachers who view parents as a "resource" which they personally have the "ability to mobilize" in support of their efforts to increase student achievement are likely to be strengthened in their "level of capacity". When teachers work in environments where their efforts to involve parents are supported, when they are provided with opportunities to learn more about effective parent involvement practices, and when they are challenged to involve parents in meaningful ways and are rewarded for their efforts to do so, their sense of the "level of opportunity" is bound to increase.

Viewed in this context, effective parent involvement practices and initiatives clearly have the potential to bolster teachers' level of capacity and opportunity, with correspondingly positive effects on their sense of efficacy. This conclusion is certainly supported by Rosenholtz (1989), whose research findings were mentioned earlier but are worth restating here: "Parent involvement in their children's learning is yet another direct, independent contributor to teacher certainty (efficacy)," (p. 114).
The literature is clear. Compounded with the benefits that increased levels of parent involvement provide for students and parents, the positive outcomes that these kinds of practices and programs hold for teachers make them worthwhile indeed.

Enhancing levels of parent involvement is a worthy goal. Achieving the goal, however, is not necessarily a simple, straightforward task. Educational leaders who wish to modify entrenched teacher practices in this area need a clear understanding of teachers' current perceptions, attitudes, and practices related to parent involvement issues, and must further understand the most appropriate strategies for modifying these perceptions, attitudes, and practices. The investigation reported in the following chapter is designed to provide information which will increase the level of understanding in both these areas.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

As originally conceptualized, this research effort combined quantitative and qualitative methods in a multi-site case study (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Merriam, 1988) to investigate the relationship between teacher sense of efficacy and parent involvement. The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative methods is rooted in the belief that each can, in different yet mutually complementary ways, reveal insights regarding the dynamic relationships which exists in the student-parent-teacher triad. Quantitative methods, which typically involve much larger samples and the aggregation of data, can be used to indicate the existence of relationships between variables and the relative strength of those relationships (Borg and Gall, 1989). What quantitative methods do not do, however, is give those relationships a realistic manifestation and clear voice in a readily identifiable human context. Qualitative methods, based as they are in words and observations, are able to do just that. They can "provide the concrete detail needed for understanding" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 407). The "methodological triangulation" (Merriam, 1988) which results from using the two strategies in combination can create a situation in which "the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (Denzin, 1970, quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 69). Together, the two methodologies will contribute to a more complete understanding than either individually.

Borg and Gall (1989) assert that "Both qualitative and quantitative research have philosophical foundations, characteristics, and techniques
that make them ideally suited for the exploration of some questions and inadequate for the investigation of others" (p. 380). They indicate that the literature contains considerable debate on the relative merit and appropriateness of qualitative and quantitative methods, and although there are extreme views on both sides of the question, the more "moderate view" is that the different paradigms are each "best suited to certain research questions and in many cases a combination of the two approaches is superior to either" (Borg and Gall, p. 381). These authors go on to provide specific examples of a number of "large-scale research projects" in which qualitative and quantitative methods have been used successfully in combination. Other authors have provided support for using qualitative and quantitative data in combination. Fielding and Fielding argue that "qualitative work can assist quantitative work in providing a theoretical framework, validating survey data, interpreting statistical relationships and deciphering puzzling responses, selecting survey items to construct indices, and offering case study illustrations" (1986, p. 27). Reichardt and Cook (1979, quoted in Borg and Gall, 1989) discuss the benefits resulting from using the qualitative and quantitative paradigms in combination. Indeed, Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest that "it is getting harder and harder top find any methodologists solidly encamped in one epistemology or the other" (p. 20).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

One of the basic prerequisites for quantitative research of the sort appropriate for the Co-Production of Learning study is a sufficiently large and diverse sample. To obtain this sample, the research group made a decision to approach two British Columbia school districts for
permission to conduct research. The desire to include students, parents, and teachers from more than one district resulted from a variety of factors, both theoretical and practical.

One such factor was a desire to strengthen the external validity of the results. Borg and Gall (1989) note that the collection of data at several sites is one way research can be designed to help provide evidence of external validity. Coleman and LaRocque (1990), in a recent study of British Columbia school districts, demonstrated that the districts differed markedly from one another over a variety of significant measures, one of which was district ethos. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement might vary from district to district, depending on the particular ethos of the district. Including students, parents, and teachers from more than one district seemed one way to help guard against any skewing of results which might occur as a consequence of attitudes and practices particular to one district.

A number of practical considerations also played a factor in determining the districts selected for inclusion in the study. Chief among these was accessibility. Having the districts in close geographic proximity to the workplaces of the research team would facilitate all aspects of data collection. In addition, the research team believed a familiarity with district practices and personnel would be useful in laying the groundwork for the study, and for identifying the specific schools within each district which would be the most appropriate candidates for participation in the research project.

Based on the factors outlined above, a decision was made to approach two different school districts, one in the Interior of the
province and one in the Metropolitan Vancouver area. For purposes of the study, the Interior district was labelled Site Alpha and the Metropolitan Vancouver district labelled Site Beta. Early in the fall of 1990, Dr. Coleman wrote to both school districts formally requesting permission to conduct the research project. Both districts gave their approval.

The following discussion of subsequent stages in research design implementation, with the exception of site descriptions, is primarily focussed on Site Alpha. The reason for this is that is the part of the implementation with which I was directly involved and have first-hand knowledge. Other research team members located in the Lower Mainland implemented the research design in Site Beta.

**Site Descriptions**

Site Alpha is a relatively large district, both in terms of the student population it serves and its geographic range. Like most school districts in the Interior, it serves a community with a resource-based economy, in this case forestry. Although the administrative office and most of the schools are clustered in and around the district's one main population centre, there are three communities at a considerable distance from the district's administrative centre, each with its own elementary and high schools. In addition, there are a number of very small outlier schools scattered throughout the district. The main population centre is served by five fairly large high schools and approximately forty elementary schools.
Site Beta, the district in the metropolitan Vancouver area, contrasts significantly with the Interior district targeted for the study. Coleman and Tabin (1992) describe Site Beta as

a medium-sized suburban school district located just outside a large metropolitan area. Most residents commute to jobs in the city, but a number are employed in town in mainly service industries. While there is some agricultural area around the population centre, those who live in these areas are generally employed locally or in the city, but have chosen a rural lifestyle, often with hobby farms. Most of the schools in the district are found in the main population centre, with a few scattered in the rural areas. There are four high schools serving this suburb, and 24 elementary schools. The community has grown rapidly over the past ten years with an influx of new residents. A fifth high school is being constructed and several new elementary schools are also being planned.

One of the major interest areas of the larger research project was the transition experience of students as they moved from elementary to secondary school. This focus had a number of implications for which classrooms were targeted within each district. To obtain data on student attitudes before they entered secondary school, children in grade six and seven classes were targeted for the initial phase of data gathering. It seemed that as these children moved into secondary school, the process of tracking them and of gathering data on the transition process would be greatly simplified if the children in the study attended the same secondary school. Consequently, a decision was made to target grade six and seven classrooms in elementary schools feeding into the same secondary school.
The secondary school catchment area chosen in Site Alpha to provide a sample for the research effort is diverse in character, and could in many senses be seen as a microcosm of the larger district. The socioeconomic level of the neighbourhoods from which students are drawn ranges from low to high, and includes several of the more exclusive neighbourhoods in the community. A considerable number of students are bussed to the school, and there is a good mix of students from urban and rural backgrounds.

**Establishing the Research Sample**

In Site Alpha, the task of establishing the research sample occupied approximately two and one half months, beginning in late September, 1990. Members of the research team accepted responsibility for contacting different elementary schools in the catchment area of the targeted secondary school. Personal contact with the principals of five elementary schools was established by phone at the beginning of October. The researchers indicated that this initial contact would be followed by letters of explanation for principals and teachers from Dr. Coleman outlining in more detail the purpose of the research and the expectations for participating. These letters of explanation were accompanied by consent forms. In all cases, principals indicated an interest in the project, but suggested it would be up to the teachers in whose classrooms the research would occur to make the final decision regarding participation. In some instances, principals wanted to talk to the teachers themselves, while in others the research team member was asked to contact the teacher directly to discuss the project. Response from the school was not always prompt, and for several schools a
number of follow-up contacts had to be made before an answer was received. Three of the five schools initially contacted agreed to participate in the research, with a total of five teachers deciding to involve their classes. Upon receiving negative responses from two schools, research team members contacted two other school principals in the catchment area and followed the same process for inviting their participation. In both cases, the principals and teachers involved agreed, resulting in total of seven classrooms in five different schools. Agreement was secured from the final school in early December. Consent forms were completed by all participating teachers and principals.

Each of the five elementary schools in this catchment area contributing to the sample serves a distinctly different sort of community and, not surprisingly, each has its own distinct character. Brief descriptions of the individual schools are provided in Appendix A. From these schools, seven classrooms participated in the study. Schools A and H each provided a grade six and grade seven class, while one class in each of the other schools was involved. Of these, one was a split grade five/six and two were grade seven classes.

In Beta District, the process of recruiting schools and classrooms to provide the research sample was similar to that occurring in Alpha District. Two schools agreed to participate. School A provided three classes for the study, all Grades 6/7 classes, while School B provided two classes - one 6/7 and the other 7. These schools are also briefly described in Appendix A.

The process of establishing which schools and classrooms would contribute the sample for the research project in Site Alpha took somewhat longer than initially expected, largely because a greater than
anticipated amount of time passed between the initial invitation to a school to participate in the research and the eventual response. In addition, two negative responses from the first group of schools contacted lengthened the process.

Once the classes providing the sample for the study were established, the specific students and parents to take part in the research were identified. Letters explaining the nature and purpose of the research project were sent to the parents of all children in each class. Attached to these letters was a form inviting parents to respond regarding the degree of involvement, if any, they wanted to have in the project. From the responses on the returned forms and, in some cases, from follow-up phone contact, the research team was able to identify the individual students and parents who wished to be involved in the research project.

The level of involvement varied somewhat from class to class, though in general between half and two-thirds of the families in each class chose to participate in some way. Of the participating student-parent pairs, approximately two-thirds opted for the full participation option. The sample for the first round of data collection consisted of 230 grade six and seven students, 230 parents, and fourteen teachers. Two teachers in Site Beta withdrew following the collection the first round of survey data, reducing the sample to twelve teachers and 187 pupil and parent pairs. (Collinge and Coleman, 1992)

From this larger group, a smaller sample of individuals who would be the subject of in-depth, semi-structured interviews was established. All teachers, along with three student-parent pairs from each class, randomly selected and stratified by the gender of the student, were
identified for interviews. The interviews with this group of parents, students, and teachers provided data for qualitative analysis. When completed, this analysis should produce results to reinforce and extend the linkages revealed by quantitative analysis.

Given the nature of the selection process, it is worth noting that the sample may not be entirely representative. The limitations of volunteer samples are well recognized (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 227-229). The nature of this type of research and the demands it imposes on the subjects makes putting together a truly random sample a daunting, if not impossible, task.

Development of Data Collection Instruments

During the late summer and early fall of 1990 the research team also worked to develop data collection instruments. Collinge and Coleman (1992) describe activities of the research team and the instruments developed as a result.

Quantitative. Likert-type survey instruments were developed for each group of subjects: students, teachers, and parents. Initially, items were generated by eleven members of the original research team who, collectively, represented teachers, parents, and/or school administrators. In brainstorming sessions, the group created items that were intended to measure attitudes and behaviours thought critical to the development of collaborative relationships among all three groups. These items drew on interpretation of the parent involvement literature and the personal and professional experiences of members of the research team.

The student questionnaire consisted of 51 items forming 6 scales: communication with parents; student values school; perception of school/home collaboration; personal efficacy;
perception of student/teacher collaboration: and perception of parent valuing school. An additional item asked students to rate their school on a ten point scale.

The parent questionnaire consisted of 61 items forming 9 scales: perception of student/teacher communication; perception of student/parent communication; perception of teacher/parent communication (instruction); perception of teacher/parent communication (general); perception of teacher concern about parent involvement; perception of parent/school communication; parent values schooling; perception of school climate; and perception of parent efficacy. Additional items asked parents to rate the school on a ten point scale, and requested some demographic data, including family education level.

The teacher questionnaire consisted of 46 items forming 6 scales: parent involvement; teacher collegiality; collaboration with students; parent efficacy; teacher efficacy; and student responsibility . . .

Qualitative. Interview schedules were prepared for the three groups noted above, plus the principal of the participating school. The topics broached in the open-ended interview questions and their probes reflected the intent of the questions contained in the survey. The interviews were intended to provide an opportunity for subjects to elaborate on the notions addressed in the survey. (p. 10-11)

Data Collection: Time 1

Once formal consents had been secured from the principals and teachers in whose schools and classrooms the research project would be implemented, it was then possible to begin the process of data collection. In some instances, this consent was received relatively early, while in others it took more time to obtain. A second factor that influenced the timing of the data collection process was the availability of research team members to conduct interviews. Consequently, the process of data
collection began at different times in the different schools involved. To facilitate discussion of the data collection process, the gathering of survey data and interview data are dealt with separately.

Quantitative Data: Surveys

All parents, students, and teachers involved in the research project completed a pencil and paper survey, which in all but one of the schools was distributed in the first or second week of December. In the remaining school, surveys were completed in the first and second week of January. Parent surveys were prefaced by a consent form which included a statement clarifying the confidential nature of the survey, and accompanied by an envelope into which the survey was to be sealed immediately upon completion. Student surveys were attached to a brief information form for the students, and also accompanied by an envelope. A message on the envelope reinforced the confidential nature of the information provided by the surveys.

Surveys and envelopes were distributed by research team members to the teachers in participating classes. Parent surveys were given by the teachers to their students to take home. In some cases teachers had the participating children in their class complete the student surveys and seal them in the envelopes during class time; in others, students were given both the parent and student surveys to be taken home, completed, and returned.

Survey distribution was a simple, straightforward task. Collecting the completed surveys, however, was a different matter and provided a substantial challenge to research team members. Initially, team members made the somewhat optimistic assumption that one week was a
reasonable time frame for surveys to be distributed to students and parents, completed, and returned to the school. As it turned out, this was not the case.

A number of factors complicated the collection process. In several instances, teachers did not hand the surveys out when they indicated they would. Also, the time of year in which the surveys were distributed proved to be a factor which worked against a speedy distribution and return of surveys. Preparations for the holiday season make Christmas a busy month for parents, and the completion of a pencil and paper survey did not appear to be a priority for some of the participants. A third factor was the unreliability of some students to function as couriers between home and school. In a significant number of cases, follow-up phone contact revealed that, although surveys had been distributed by the teacher they had not been received by the parent. Some surveys were lost, while others were found stuffed in the bottom of the student's school bag.

**Qualitative Data: Interviews**

In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participating teachers and a randomly selected, volunteer sample of parent-student pairs, over a nine week period beginning in the first week of November. At the commencement of the interview phase of the project, before any interviews were completed, Dr. Coleman conducted a training session for research team members. The purpose of this training session was to establish a common set of procedures for conducting interviews and to standardize questioning strategies for eliciting additional information from respondents. Tapes of simulated interviews
were critically analyzed by the research group as part of the process of establishing effective, standard, interview techniques. It was decided that all interviews would be taped for later transcription and that, during the interviews, notes of key statements would be made.

I conducted all teacher interviews in Site Alpha in the teacher's home school, with two exceptions. The out-of-school interviews were conducted in the evening in the teachers' homes. Teacher interviews, which generally took thirty to forty-five minutes to complete, occurred during the first three weeks of December.

The first Time 1 interviews with parents and students were conducted by Dr. Coleman and one of the doctoral candidates in early November. The remaining interviews were completed by the other Site Alpha team members in December and the first week of January. Various team members were assigned the responsibility for interviewing the parents and students from specific schools. Phone contact was made with the parents to establish an appropriate time for the interview which, whenever possible, was carried out in their home. In addition to being convenient, the home was chosen as the most appropriate location for parent interviews because it was thought it would provide the "safest", most comfortable environment for the person being interviewed. In some cases, the parent student interviews were conducted by two team members, with one interviewing the student while the other interviewed the parent(s) in a different room of the house. When one research group member was interviewing both the student and parents, the first interview was conducted in a location in the home which prevented the other respondent from overhearing the responses. Every attempt was made to eliminate the possibility that the answers of one subject would
influence the responses of the other. When the interviews were completed, copies were made of the tapes and then the originals were forwarded to the research team member whose responsibility it was to transcribe them. Notes made during the interviews were sent to Dr. Coleman, as were the original tapes and the transcribed interviews, when completed.

**Intervention**

Two training sessions focusing on parent involvement, one for parents and one for teachers, were conducted in mid-January, 1991. The training sessions shared the same general goals: to familiarize participants with the potential benefits of increased levels of parent involvement, to provide strategies for increasing the level of parent involvement, and to address any questions or concerns regarding this topic. The research group hoped that providing this type of training for parents and teachers would create a climate favourable to enhanced levels of parent involvement by establishing a shared base of knowledge and understanding, and would give both groups possible methods for achieving increased involvement.

The researchers contracted the services of Ms. L. Page, an educational consultant specializing in parent involvement programs, to present the training sessions. The research group believed that Ms. Page's educational background, as well as her experience in presenting training sessions in parent involvement to employee groups in both government and industry, made her an appropriate choice as presenter. Communications with Ms. Page regarding the expectations of the research group and the scope and purpose of the training sessions led to
the development of a presentation to meet the goals outlined in the preceding paragraph.

The training session for parents was held the evening of January 17, in the library of the secondary school serving the catchment area involved in the study. Prior to the training session, letters of invitation were sent, via their children, to all parents who had agreed to participate in the study. These letters to parents were followed up by personal phone calls from members of the research group, inviting participation. About seventy parents attended the two and one-half hour session, which made parents aware of the benefits parental involvement, provided strategies parents could use to work with their child on school related matters, and emphasized the importance of regular contact with their child's teacher. The session concluded with a lively question and answer period and the distribution of handouts, which provided an overview of the information presented throughout the evening, and gave parents examples of instructional strategies and activities they might employ with their children at home. All members of the research group were present at the training session for parents, which was also attended by several participating teachers and a principal from one of the schools which had two classes involved in the study.

A six hour training session for the seven teachers was held the next day, January 18, in a meeting room of the school district's central administration office. Research group members attended this session as well. During the training session teachers were made aware of research findings regarding increased levels of parent involvement, discussed methods by which parent involvement levels might be increased, and shared personal parent involvement experiences. The session ended with
an activity in which each of the participating teachers made a commitment to implement, as soon as possible, at least one of the parent involvement strategies discussed that day, and maintain it for the remainder of the school year.

Two informally structured evening follow-up sessions for teachers were held by members of the research group at approximately six week intervals following the initial training session. The stated purpose of each of these sessions, led by Dr. Coleman, was to provide participating teachers the opportunity to discuss with their colleagues the parent involvement strategies they had implemented, and to provide feedback to the research group on their activities. By bringing the teachers involved in the study together at regular intervals, it was also hoped that the profile of parent involvement initiatives would be maintained on each teacher's agenda, and that their level of commitment would remain high. All but one of the teachers attended the first follow-up session. The same teacher and one other were unable to attend the second follow-up session.

**Data Collection: Time 2**

The second round of data collection, consisting of surveys of all participants and interviews with all teachers and randomly selected parents and students occurred in the last week of May and the first weeks of June, 1991. Research team members delivered parent and student surveys and a teacher survey to participating teachers, who administered the actual distribution and collection of the surveys. Parent surveys were taken home for completion and returned by the students, while in most cases the student surveys were administered by
the teacher during class time. Generally, the process of round two
survey distribution and collection was much more straightforward than
the initial round, with researchers encountering fewer problems in
collecting completed surveys. Teachers generally seemed to handle the
distribution and collection of surveys more effectively, and fewer follow-
up phone calls from researchers to parents regarding survey completion
and return were required.

With respect to the interviews conducted for the second round of data
collection, a decision was made by the research group to have a different
researcher than in Time 1 conduct the interview with individuals
interviewed during the first. This decision was based on the perception
that there would be less chance of interviewer bias if the interviewer and
subject had not discussed the interview questions previously. Also,
researchers thought a different interviewer might draw out the subjects' responses through the use of follow-up probe questions in a somewhat
different fashion than the initial interviewer, thereby increasing the
range of data available from the interviews. With a small number of
exceptions, parents were interviewed in their homes. Student interviews,
when possible, took place in the school setting, since the perception of
researchers during the first round of data collection was that the
children felt more at ease in this environment than in the home setting,
and were more willing to speak freely. Teacher interviews were conducted
at the school after school hours.

Coding

Once interviews had been transcribed, the research team began
working to identify the issues, practices, perceptions, and opinions
discussed by the respondents in the interviews. The first step in this process was to render the transcripts into a form which, for analysis purposes, would be both manageable and accessible. The method used to achieve this goal was descriptive coding, following Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 56). Descriptive coding was seen to have a number of advantages: it would allow for the classification of raw interview data into particular topics and subtopics; facilitate the identification of recurrent themes and issues; and simplify the retrieval of relevant data.

The first step in the descriptive coding process involved developing a list of relevant codes. Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 57) discuss several approaches to creating this initial code list. These range from a "prefabricated" list based on "the conceptual framework, research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and key variables" prepared prior to coding to a much more inductive, or "grounded" approach whereby codes are generated to describe only the data which presents itself. The two main advantages of the latter approach are that it facilitates a more "open-minded and more context-sensitive" coding process, and that it produces a tighter fit between the data and the codes which are developed to represent it. The research team saw these to be worthwhile advantages, with the result that the "grounded" approach was used to develop a list of codes.

The research team met for a two week period in July of 1991, under the direction of Dr. Coleman, for the purpose of developing a list of codes which would be used for data analysis. The first step in the process was the selection of a parent, student, and teacher interview which would serve as the initial data source for generating codes. The three interviews chosen were selected because it was felt they were the most
comprehensive, both in the range of topics discussed throughout the interview and in the depth of the responses. Meeting as a whole group, the research team then went through each of the interviews, line by line, identifying codable information segments and developing codes which not only accurately reflected the content of the statements, but were clear and unambiguous for all team members.

Agreeing on codes proved not to be a simple, straightforward task. The various perceptions of team members regarding what code would best fit a particular piece of information frequently generated considerable discussion. As a result, the process of generating a workable set of codes from the initial interviews, working as a whole group, became exceptionally time consuming. To expedite the process, the research team broke into three smaller groups, one of which looked at the parent interview, one the student, and one the teacher. These smaller groups then continued the process of identifying codable information segments and developing codes to describe that information. (Specific examples of this process are provided in the following discussion on topic specific coding.) The groups then came together to share the codes they had generated, and to look at the transcripts one more time in light of the codes developed by the smaller groups. When it occurred that two or more of the small groups had assigned the same type of information a different code, whole group discussion then resolved which code would be used. Similarly, any questions of interpretation were discussed until consensus was reached regarding how various codes would be applied. The result of this whole group processing was the development of a set of operational definitions (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 60) which helped ensure that the codes were applied consistently over time and that
different team members would be coding the same information in the same way. A workable, comprehensive master code list which, it was believed, could then be applied to the other interviews with few additions or revisions was the end product of these discussions.

Once a preliminary master code list had been established, its viability was tested by having different team members use it to independently code a second interview. Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 60) refer to this type of double-coding as an important strategy for increasing definitional clarity and checking the reliability of established codes. Three groups of team members coded a parent interview, a student interview, and a teacher interview. When results of this coding procedure were compared, some small differences were found in the codes assigned. Most of these related to variations in interpretation of existing codes, and a number of codes and operational definitions were revised for purposes of clarification. Also, several new codes were added at this stage to deal with information not raised in the interviews from which the master code list had been established. Some minor revisions and additions had been anticipated by the research team, and were not viewed as a challenge to the workability of the master coding list. Rather, it was felt that the master code list created through the process discussed above was both comprehensive and viable, and could be used to code the remaining interviews.

All parent, student, and teacher interviews were then distributed to team members for coding, with two or three team members sharing responsibility for each group and dividing the interviews in that group among themselves. Coding of these interviews was completed over the remainder of the summer, and the coded interviews were submitted to
Dr. Coleman. In a number of these interviews, information which was felt to be relevant but which was not covered by the master code list was identified. The team member coding that interview developed his/her own code for that information, and included the new code or codes with the returned interviews. The master code list was then reexamined in light of the new codes submitted, and some minor revisions and additions were made. All interviews were then returned to the individuals who had coded them, so that codes could be adjusted in light of the revised version of the master code list. Changes to the coded interviews proved to be minimal, and the recoded interviews were once again submitted to Dr. Coleman. This process was completed in January of 1992.

FULFILLING RESEARCH TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

With the submission of the coded interviews to Dr. Coleman, the obligations of individual research team members from Site Alpha, myself included, to the larger research project were essentially fulfilled. Team members had earned access to all data collected in the first year of the study, including the statistical analyses of the quantitative data performed under the direction of Dr. Coleman, as well as the coded Time 1 interviews and the transcribed Time 2 interviews.

At this point, it may be useful to recap the extent of my personal involvement in the larger research project. This will provide clarification of which aspects of the research task I performed myself, and which were a collaborative venture with team members.
Individual Responsibilities

1) Solicit and obtain consent for participation in the research project from three schools and four teachers
2) Identify parent and student participants from four classrooms
3) Administer the distribution and collection of surveys to teachers, parents, and students from four classrooms, Time 1 and 2
4) Interview seven teachers, five principals, and nine parents
5) Code and recode six Time 1 teacher interviews, using the master code list
6) Code fourteen Time 2 teacher interviews, using the master code list
7) Prepare abstracts for articles on research related to parent involvement

Shared Responsibilities

1) Provide input into original conceptual framework of the larger research project
2) provide input to the construction of survey instruments and interview schedules
3) serve as a liaison and contact person for the school district
4) facilitate the establishment of appropriate reference groups of teachers, parents, and students
5) administer the distribution and collection of survey instruments
6) facilitate training sessions for teachers and parents
7) assist in data analysis and interpretation
8) identify articles for an annotated bibliography of research related to parent involvement

DATA ANALYSIS

Having completed my review of the teacher efficacy and parent involvement literature during the summer and fall of 1991, in January of
1992 I was at a point where I could begin a qualitative analysis of the Time 1 data in order to identify the perceptions, attitudes, and practices related to parent involvement of the participating teachers. However, personal and family obligations, professional responsibilities, and a clearly felt need for some time for personal regeneration after two uninterrupted years of master's course work and thesis research activities resulted in my setting aside this task until the final week of July, 1992.

Commencing that week, I set out to investigate the first of the two research questions I had posed for myself: "What are the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers regarding parent involvement?" The answer to this question seemed a logical prerequisite to any investigation of the changes in perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement experienced during the first year of the study, which was my second research focus.

**Topic Specific Coding**

Working from clean transcripts and following the inductive process of code generation outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 57) my first task was to generate a list of codes which I could use in my analysis of the Time 1 interviews. The first step in this process was to choose the most comprehensive teacher interview, and work through this interview on a line by line basis, identifying and assigning codes to the teacher comments which were in any way related to the topic of parent involvement. The method of generating these codes was similar to that used by the research team the previous summer to devise the master code list. The difference was that, since I was focussing solely on aspects of
the interview related to parent involvement, the specificity of the codes was greater. The following examples will provide an illustration of how these codes were developed.

Consider this portion of text from the opening section of the teacher interview (15100) used to generate the initial codes:

**Question 1: Does this school solicit or encourage parent involvement?**

Very definitely. We have what I call a PTA...parents in communication. Very active. They do not involve them in the classroom. It's more outside activities, bake sales and fairs and things like that. Not in the classroom. They are involved a lot in the primary. Like at the moment our Grade 1's have a station study going on and there's a baking station and a sewing station so the teachers have brought the parents in to work at the stations with the different groups. Of course they've got 50 students so it's a lot of stations working. In the intermediate there is not that much. My parents, I have an open classroom policy where the parents come in at any time. If they want to they just give me a call. And I really feel strongly that it does a lot of good. If I'm having a problem with a parent I'll phone her and say, "Come on in and see what's going on."

In these statements the teacher discusses a number of different aspects of parent involvement: her perception of school practices of parent involvement, parent involvement at the primary and intermediate levels, and some of her own attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement.

The first segment

**Question 1: Does this school solicit or encourage parent involvement?**
Very definitely.
is the teacher's perception (TP) of the school's practices (SPRAC) of
parent involvement at the school level (PIS) and so generates the code
TP/SPRAC//PIS. Following the pattern established with the master code
list established by the research team, I continued to separate third level
codes with a "/".

The next segment, "We have what I call a PTA . . . parents in
communication," is slightly different in that it does not represent the
teacher's perception. Rather, it reports a school practice (SPRAC) of
parent involvement at the school level (PIS). The fact that this
involvement is in a noninstructional context (NI) is made obvious in the
next sentences. The distinction between instructional and non
instructional involvement was deemed to be significant, since it is parent
involvement in instructional activities which research indicates has the
most significant benefits for students. Consequently, this segment was
initially coded SPRAC/PIS, but revised in light of information provided in
the following sentences to SPRAC/PIS//NI to identify a school practice
of parent involvement at the school level in a noninstructional context.

The next phrase, "very active", represents the teacher's perception
(TP) of the parent group's level of involvement at the school (PIS) and so
was coded TP/PIS. Also, because of additional information provided in
her next comments, this code was later revised to TP/PIS//NI.

They do not involve them in the classroom. It's more outside
activities, bake sales and fairs and things like that. Not in the
classroom.

This segment clarifies Teacher 15100's perception (TP) of the sorts of
school-related activities with which parents in this group involve
themselves (PIS), and notes specifically that it is non-classroom (non-instructional) involvement (NI). The code assigned was TP/PIS//NI.

"They are involved a lot in the primary," is a general statement of the teacher's perception (TP) of another way in which parents are involved in the school (PIS), so this segment was coded TP/PIS. Though it is not clear in the interview transcript whether "they" refers to the same group of parents discussed in the preceding sentences, or a different group, reference to the tape recording of the interview makes that clear. Teacher 15100 pauses for a moment after uttering the phrase "Not in the classroom," and the sense is communicated that she is finished talking about what she calls the "PTA" and that "they" now refers to parents in general. This is also suggested by the content of her previous comments. When questions of interpretation of the transcript arose during coding, reference was made to the tape recording for clarification. However, this was seldom necessary.

Like at the moment our Grade 1's have a station study going on and there's a baking station and a sewing station so the teachers have brought the parents in to work at the stations with the different groups. Of course they've got 50 students so it's a lot of stations working.

In this segment of text, Teacher 15100 provides an example to support her previously stated perception that parents "are involved a lot in the primary." She describes a situation in which parents are working in an instructional context in several primary classrooms. The code PIS/IN (parent involvement in school/instruction) is descriptive of this level of involvement.
Teacher 15100's next statement, "In the intermediate there is not that much," is clearly an expression of her perception (TP) of the level of parent involvement in the school's intermediate classrooms (PIS). Since the context does not clarify whether she is referring to instructional or non-instructional involvement, no third level code is applied and the segment is coded TP/PIS.

Following these perceptions of parent involvement in wider school context, the teacher shifts to her own practices and attitudes which determine the type of parent involvement in her classroom.

My parents, I have an open classroom policy where the parents come in at any time. If they want to they just give me a call.

The first sentence describes a "policy" or practice (PRAC) she has regarding parent involvement in her class (PIC), resulting in the code PRAC/PIC. The second sentence elaborates on the practice, indicating that although she has "an open classroom policy" she expects that before parents do come in to her class they will first notify her of their intentions. This appears to be a condition (COND) placed on parent involvement, and so the segment is coded PRAC/PIC//COND.

In her next statement, "I really feel strongly that it does a lot of good," she is definitely expressing an attitude (TA, for teacher attitude) toward parent involvement in the class (PIC), so it is coded (TA/PIC).

The final sentence, "If I'm having a problem with a parent I'll phone her and say, 'Come on in and see what's going on.'," refers to teacher communication with a parent (TCP) regarding that parent's involvement in class (PIC), resulting from a perceived problem (PROB) and so generates the code TCP/PIC//PROB.
Codes were inserted directly into the interview text as coding proceeded, through the use of a word processing program. The codes both identify and separate meaningful segments of the text. After generating and inserting appropriate codes, the transcript of the interview appeared as follows:

**Question 1: Does this school solicit or encourage parent involvement?**

Very definitely. TP/SPRAC//PIS We have what I call a PTA...parents in communication. SPRAC/PIS//NI Very active. TP/PIS//NI They do not involve them in the classroom. It's more outside activities, bake sales and fairs and things like that. Not in the classroom. TP/PIS//NI They are involved a lot in the primary. TP/PIS Like at the moment our Grade 1's have a station study going on and there's a baking station and a sewing station so the teachers have brought the parents in to work at the stations with the different groups. Of course they've got 50 students so it's a lot of stations working. PIS/IN In the Intermediate there is not that much. TP/PIS My parents, I have an open classroom policy where the parents come in at any time. PRAC/PIC If they want to they just give me a call. PRAC/PIC//COND And I really feel strongly that it does a lot of good. TA/PIC If I'm having a problem with a parent I'll phone her and say, come on in and see what's going on. TCP/PIC//PROB

As I analyzed successive passages of text, I developed new descriptive codes when none of the already established codes could be reasonably applied. In this manner, the two most comprehensive teacher interviews were analyzed and a preliminary list of codes created. Following Miles and Huberman's (1984, p. 63) suggestion for verifying the internal consistency of a coding system by checking "code-recode" consistency, several days after I completed coding the second interview, I
used this list of codes to recode clean transcripts of both the first and second interviews. When this was completed, I compared the two sets of coded interviews to verify that I was consistently applying the system of codes I had devised. Differences between the coded interviews were few, and related mainly third level codes which had been used to add specificity to the description of a portion of text in one interview and not the other. A second method I used to verify the validity of the coding system I developed was to cross-reference the first two interviews I coded to those coded earlier using the master code list. Differences existed in that my codes were in some cases more specific than ones from the master list, but this cross-referencing showed good consistency in both the general codes applied and in the segments of text identified as requiring a separate code.

Satisfied that I had established a workable system of codes, I then coded the remaining teacher interviews. New codes were added to the list when I encountered a portion of text which could not be accurately described by an existing code. With each successive interview the number of codes which I needed to add to the list decreased, so that during the coding of the last half of the interviews I needed to make very few adjustments to the code list. The final list of codes arising from the teacher interviews is shown in Appendix D.

**Organizing the Data**

Once I completed assigning codes to all Time 1 teacher interviews, I then began the process of developing categories which I would use to classify the data. Taking into account Merriam's (1988) guidelines on category construction in qualitative analysis, I worked to devise
categories which would be unambiguous yet sufficiently comprehensive that there would be a "minimum of unassignable data items" (p. 135).

The broadest of these categories were suggested by the research question itself: "What are the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of teachers regarding parent involvement?" Clearly, a category for perceptions, one for attitudes, and another for practices seemed a logical starting point for sorting the data, though it was obvious from the outset that these categories were too general to be ultimately useful. Working from the list of descriptive codes generated in the first stage of analysis, I then used a process of "clustering" (Merriam, 1988, p. 149) to arrange the codes related to perceptions, to attitudes, and to practices into more specific sub-categories within the larger groupings. This process resulted in approximately a dozen and a half categories within which I believed I could effectively organize the interview data.

The process I initially used to organize coded interview segments into categories was decidedly low-tech. Working with a colour-coded photocopy of the coded interview and a pair of scissors, I arranged sections of text into the categories I had established. Though time consuming, the process was effective, and after I had completed organizing the data from two interviews using this strategy it became obvious that some revision of the categories would be beneficial. In several instances categories were too broad and contained information which needed be categorized further. Several other categories were too specific, contained very little data, and could be merged with other, more inclusive categories. Arranging and rearranging the data segments from these two interviews resulted in the development of ten categories, which were the categories I used to organize the data from the next interview.
This new collection of categories worked well, and was used without revision to organize the data from the remaining interviews.

In addition to restructuring the headings for categorizing data, I also adjusted my strategy for organizing the data to one which was considerably more high-tech. By creating a file for each category and using the clipboard and paste functions of Microsoft Word on a Macintosh computer, I moved portions of text from the coded interview into the appropriate category. Sorting text in this manner was far more efficient, and allowed me to print the contents of each category upon completion of my analysis of the interview.

What resulted from this process was a verbatim listing of the comments made by each teacher relating to a particular domain of parent involvement. Miles and Huberman (1984) stress the importance of hanging on, as much as possible, to the words upon which the analysis is based (p. 54-55). This verbatim listing of teacher comments, by category, certainly made that possible, but the dozens of pages of text resulting from this process were rather unwieldy to work with. I perceived I could reduce the data considerably without compromising its essential meaning, and at the same time maintain a direct connection with the original text so that I could do any back-referencing quickly and easily.

**Data Reduction**

According to Miles and Huberman (1984) data reduction is an essential part of qualitative analysis. It "sharpens, sorts, focusses, discards and organizes data in such a way that "final" conclusions can be drawn and verified" (p. 21). For me, the process of reducing the data
into a more manageable format began with editing each codable segment in a category into a few key words or a phrase which summed up its meaning. The following example from the category "Teacher Perception of Obstacles to Parent Involvement" illustrates this. Consider the coded interview segment

around the Grade 7 year a lot of them (mothers) start to look for part time jobs and things and are not as readily available as they have in other years. TP/PIO//W In grade seven they're working part time TP/PIO//W and expecting their kid be be able to take care of themselves. TP/PIO//PA

Two obstacles to parent involvement are suggested in this statement. The first is that "a lot" of mothers of grade seven students have less time to involve themselves with their children's education because of work responsibilities. The phrase "lack of parent time - work" summarizes this perceived obstacle to parent involvement. The other perceived obstacle represented in this teacher's comments relates to parental attitudes regarding their children's growing responsibility and ability "to take care of themselves". The phrase "parent attitudes - student responsibility" summarizes this obstacle to parent involvement.

In this way, I reduced the verbatim comments of each teacher in each category to a few words, and entered this reduced description as a marginal notation beside the original text. Point form lists of these condensed marginal notations provided a succinct summary of each teacher's comments in a particular domain.
Creating Data Displays

Miles and Huberman (1984) speak emphatically regarding the importance of creating systematic, focussed, non-narrative displays to facilitate the presentation and and enhance the comprehension of data. Such displays, they argue,

are a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis . . . (they) assemble organized information in an immediately accessible, compact form, so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next-step analysis the display suggests may be useful. (p. 21-22)

Following Miles and Huberman’s (1984) admonition that "You know what you display." (p. 79), and heeding their advice to be "inventive, self-conscious, and iterative" (p. 22), I undertook to construct tables which used the condensed phrases generated via the data reduction process. I designed these tables to represent the range of teacher responses in a particular domain, and allow for a cross-site comparison of responses. An example of the table constructed to represent teacher responses in the category "Teacher Perception of Obstacles to Parent Involvement" is shown in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of P I Obstacles</th>
<th>T 11</th>
<th>T 12</th>
<th>T 13</th>
<th>T 14</th>
<th>T 15</th>
<th>T 16</th>
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Table 1. Teacher Perception of Obstacles to Parent Involvement.
The left hand column of the table contains phrases summarizing teacher responses in this domain. Moving to the right, each successive column represents one participating teacher, who is identified by a notation at the top of that column. The symbol "•" indicates that the teacher identified at the top of that column made the statement summarized at the left of the row in which the "•" occurs.

As I entered the key words and phrases summarizing successive teachers' responses to a table, I realized that a further reduction of the data was not only possible but would be advantageous, in that patterns in teacher responses would become more clearly evident through a more condensed presentation. For example, the responses summarized by the phrases "lack of parent time - young children", "lack of parent time - help other siblings", and "lack of parent time - household duties" could be collapsed into the larger category "lack of parent time - family responsibilities". Similarly, the phrases "parent attitudes - student responsibility", "parent attitudes - education is teacher's job", and "parent attitudes - can't help" could be adequately represented in the chart under the more general heading "parent attitudes". Synthesizing the comments in this fashion made the similarities in the responses of different teachers visually more evident. A string of "•" symbols across a row of the chart, as is the case with "teacher attitudes" or "lack of parent time - work" in the chart above, graphically illustrates that those considerations figure prominently in teachers' perceptions of obstacles to parent involvement.

Representing the content of the teacher interviews in these tables proved a simple, effective way to summarize the findings of the qualitative analysis. The tables illustrate the range of a teacher's
responses in a particular domain, and indicate the number of other teachers who responded similarly. They make references to the original text a straightforward matter, involving a simple matching of the summary phrase in the left hand column with the marginal notations made beside the teacher's verbatim comments in a particular category.

Once I finished constructing tables for each category of teacher response, I arrived at the point where I was able to articulate an answer to my first research question: "What are the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teacher regarding parent involvement?" I used the tables to guide and structure the manner in which I reported the findings of my qualitative analysis. I found them extremely useful for this purpose; essentially, the tables established a foundation for my discussion of the data pertinent to this research question. They are included for reference in Appendix E. The discussion of the findings they represent is presented in the following chapter.

To answer the second research question, "In matters related to parent involvement, what changes occurred in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers in the first year of the study?", I needed to complete a qualitative analysis of the Time 2 teacher interviews. Using the list of codes established during analysis of the Time 1 interviews, I first coded the seven interviews Time 2 interviews from Site 1. Next, I organized the data into the same ten categories, following the process I used with the Time 1 data. When I had organized the data from these seven interviews into the appropriate categories, I then compared the Time 1 data for each teacher, category by category,
with the data from Time 2, in order to verify that this method would allow me to identify changes in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices expressed.

This comparison of the Time 1 and Time 2 interview data did not yield the results I had anticipated. After examining the Time 1 and Time 2 data from these seven teacher interviews, I concluded that reliably identifying changes in teacher perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement by comparing a teacher's responses in the first interview with their responses to the same question in the second interview was not possible. Several factors led me to this conclusion. The first is that, during the second interview, teachers frequently did not discuss exactly the same issues in response to a particular question as they did in the first interview. Often, their responses explored different aspects of the same general topic. Since no reference was made in the second interview to Time 1 responses, no effort was made by the interviewer to elicit answers that focused on the exactly the content mentioned by the teacher in the first interview. Consequently, the focus of the response was different, and it was simply not possible for me to make an inferential judgement regarding change. Second, reading the responses of teachers led me to conclude that one interview, lasting approximately one-half hour to forty-five minutes and covering a range of topics related to parent involvement, was not sufficiently "in-depth" to provide a properly definitive, comprehensive, and specific baseline of a teacher's perceptions, attitudes, or practices in any one area. What the interviews provided were insights of a more general nature into each teacher's views and practices.
For these reasons, I decided to include in my findings only those changes reported by the teachers themselves, in response to a direct question from the interviewer regarding whether or not changes had occurred in a specific area during that school year. Conceptualized in this way, the task of analyzing the Time 2 interviews involved first examining the interviews to identify explicitly stated changes, and then coding these changes using the descriptive codes I had already established. When I completed this portion of the analysis, I then arranged the portions of interview text discussing each change under the headings used to categorize the Time 1 data. Using the same process of summarizing the interview text using key words and phrases and marginal notations, I reduced the data so that I could present my findings regarding changes in perceptions, attitudes, and practices in tabular form. I constructed a table to represent my findings. With this process complete, I had the data necessary to begin answering my second research question, "In matters relating to parent involvement, what changes occurred in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers during the first year of the study." The discussion of my findings to this question are included in the latter portion of the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in commentary which gives voice to the teachers' perceptions, attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement. Direct quotations from the interviews are used generously throughout to better illuminate the views expressed by teachers. When appropriate, the relationship of the findings with current research on parent involvement is noted.

Analysis of teacher responses on topics related to parent involvement, which was discussed in detail in Chapter Three, resulted in the development of the ten categories listed below. These categories are:

- Perception of Parent Involvement: School Level
- Perception of School Practices for Soliciting Parent Involvement
- Teacher Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement
- Teacher Perception of Parent Attitudes to Parent Involvement
- Teacher Perception of Teacher Attitudes to Parent Involvement
- Practices of Parent Involvement: Class
- Practices of Parent Involvement: Home
- Teacher Perception of Obstacles to Parent Involvement
- Teacher Perception of Parent Teacher Relations
- Teacher Parent Communication

The following commentary focuses on articulating those aspects of parent involvement which individual teachers appeared to consider significant. The salience of particular responses is on occasion noted in the discussion, but is not the primary focus of the analysis.
The final section of the chapter discusses the findings related to changes the teachers reported in perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement over the course of the school year in which the intervention occurred.

**PERCEPTION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SCHOOL LEVEL**

At some point in the interview, all teachers mentioned ways in which parents were involved in school activities. Most of this information was volunteered as teachers responded to the question regarding the ways in which the school solicited parent involvement, though examples of parent involvement in school activities were commonly mentioned by way of example as teachers discussed other aspects of parent involvement. Teachers commented both on the types of activities parents involved themselves in, as well as on what they perceived to be the level or extent of parent involvement.

**Types of Involvement**

The types of activities in which teachers see parents involving themselves at the school level are primarily those which support teacher or school initiatives and help reinforce and expand both curricular and extra-curricular learning activities, as well as providing social opportunities for the children. Most fit neatly within Epstein's "Type 3" category of parent involvement, which refers to "parent volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or other areas of the school" as well as the parents who "come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events" (1989, p. 25). Epstein's
"Type 5", which includes involvement in school governance, is also represented in teacher responses.

Classroom Assistance

Over half of the teachers surveyed mentioned parents helping in classrooms, and most of these emphasized that it was the primary classes where the parents were providing service. Teacher 16100, for example, talked about the "incredible response" one of the primary teachers in his school to a request for parent volunteers, which left her "scrambling to find things (for them) to do. He then went on to say

I don't see much movement for parents coming in at the intermediate grades, but it's something that generally never comes up when you're talking with an intermediate teacher. I don't know why that is. (16100)

Other teachers stated similar perceptions:

I know that in the different primary classes there's quite a number that come and help. (14100)

They (parents) are involved a lot in the primary . . . In the intermediate there's not that much. (15100)

Just as an observer, I'd say on the primary level there's more parent involvement. (12100)

In some of the younger grades they're helping some of the kids with reading. I'm not sure what they're doing in the primary classrooms but I know they're in there. (11100)
Reading with children and assisting with the operation of stations the teacher had prepared were the two forms of classroom involvement mentioned most frequently. Other forms of assistance parents provided directly to the classroom teacher were driving on field trips, and helping with class parties and with special events.

**Assistance with School Programs**

On the broader school level, the teachers interviewed reported parents helping with ongoing school wide activities such as hobby programs, and with annual special events like sports day. They provide clerical and other assistance to school librarians and secretaries. Parents involve themselves with school athletics by helping coach teams and in the role of spectator, and assist with social events like fun fairs and family dances.

**Membership on Advisory Councils**

A majority of teachers mentioned parent involvement in school advisory councils. In addition to providing input on aspects of school governance, teachers perceive fund raising activities to be an important function of these groups.

**Level of Involvement**

Half of the teachers interviewed commented on what they perceived to be the extent of parent involvement in their schools. Most expressed the view that there were always lots of parents in the school, and that the parents were willing to help in many different ways.
There's a lot of parent help going on in the school right now. There are always parents around and they always seem to be doing something. (17100)

the school has an over-abundance of people doing all sorts of things . . . we've had all sorts of things going on where the parents are involved. (15100)

The perception of two teachers, one in the Interior site and one in the Lower Mainland, stands in sharp contrast to the views of the majority. Neither see much parent involvement in their schools.

There aren't many parents involved, but I think part of that is the nature of the school. (2500)

For the overall school there's five to ten that help the school and it seems to be the same five to ten. (13100)

The teacher in the Interior believes those parents who do help the school are not particularly willing to provide whatever assistance the school or individual teachers need. Contrasting his present school to community schools in smaller communities where he has worked, he reports that

Here there is a bit of parent involvement but it's the same parents over and over and they come on their own terms. (13100)

The comments of these teachers make it obvious that the type and level of parent involvement can vary significantly from school to school. That significant differences do exist in among schools in levels and types of parent involvement is supported by the findings of Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie's research (1987) on parent involvement in sixty-six
schools in eight different districts. On the whole, however, teachers' statements indicate a perception that parents actively support their school and its programs by involving themselves directly in its activities, and that teachers generally perceive this level of support to be very good.

**PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL PRACTICES FOR SOLICITING PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

When asked whether or not their school solicited or encouraged parent involvement the responses of teachers varied considerably, though in most cases the answer to this question was a simple "yes" or "definitely". Teachers who responded in this fashion then went on to provide examples of the ways in which their schools tried to increase parent involvement. Only one teacher expressed a perception that the school did not seem to be making a concerted effort to involve parents

> It does to a certain extent . . . they come on their own terms. It's not like the school goes out and really tries to solicit them. (13100)

One other teacher was somewhat equivocal.

> Yes - that is a yes and a no for this school. (25100)

Although most teachers agreed that their school viewed increasing the level of parent involvement as a valuable goal and made efforts to solicit or encourage it, few teachers were able to identify any clearly defined plan or strategy for achieving this end. Teacher 14100 was an exception:

> We just did a survey to get parents who are prepared to work in the different classrooms, and a parent representative who could be
contacted and who would then contact other people who have said they would volunteer. (14100)

More commonly, teachers perceived the school's parent involvement strategies to be somewhat unstructured.

Yes, it does (solicit involvement), although we don't seem to have a real active program to bring parents into the classrooms. (23100)

There are a lot of parent volunteers, but I am not sure how that comes about. (23100)

I don't think it is particularly set down anywhere. No, not other than the staff guide. The handbook of general philosophy of welcoming people and making them feel comfortable. (17100)

In the staff room there's parent sign-up sheets, but how many parents actually go in the staff room? In some of the newsletters it's put out. I guess that way with newsletters and sign-up sheets. That's about it. It's not like we go looking for it. (13100)

Teachers reported that regular newsletters and special notices were the primary means of encouraging involvement and inviting parents to participate in school activities. Meetings with a variety of purposes and topics were commonly used to bring parents into the school, as were special events involving both students and parents. Direct contact by teachers was viewed by a significant number of teachers as an important means of soliciting parent involvement. Other strategies included sign-up sheets, direct principal requests, and the posting of "wish lists".
Newsletters and Notices

Over half of the teachers discussed the school newsletters as a main strategy for soliciting involvement. The following comments are representative:

Normally, requests for parent involvement will appear in the newsletters at the beginning of the year. Quite often we will have a request for parents if there is something special coming up that we need parent help for. That would be mentioned in the newsletter. The newsletter is very quick to say thank-you and mention by name the parents who have come in so the parents of the school population are aware that Mrs. Smith and Mr. Smith are helping out. That would be the main recognition. (16100)

We always send home newsletters to let parents know what is happening. Generally there seems to be good communication between the administration and the parents and teachers, from what I have seen. (24100)

Several teachers mentioned special newsletters or notices to parents focussing on one particular event for which parent involvement was being solicited. Parent response sheets, sections in newsletters which were to be completed by parents and returned to the school by the students, were mentioned by two teachers as a way in which the school used the newsletter to solicit parent input and encourage involvement.

Parent Meetings

Meetings are frequently used to encourage parent involvement. Most frequently mentioned by teachers are the parent advisory council meetings, which are held on a regular basis and are used to encourage parent input in school governance, as well as to inform parents of school
and district philosophies and programs. Hosting special meetings on topics of interest, such as certain aspects of the Year 2000 initiatives or a new school policy, was seen by teachers as another way of involving parents.

**Direct Contact By Teachers**

Direct contact by teachers was mentioned by almost half of the teachers as an important strategy through which the school increased parent participation.

Mainly it's the teachers who are involved in doing the activities, phoning parents, getting in touch with parents, direct contact, notices, newsletters going home saying, "Hey, we could use some help with this if you have some time." Mainly it's the individual teachers saying, "Hey, we're going to be doing this. We need some help." (15100)

Yes, generally it's (soliciting involvement) done by individual teachers who invite parents into the classroom. (16100)

Personal contact - I think teachers grabbing people and saying, "Yes, I'd like you to listen to a bunch of my kids read once a week," that sort of thing. (17100)

One teacher expressed a perception of administrative support for teachers' efforts to involve parents.

As teachers we are given a great deal of freedom so if we wanted to bring parents in there are no reservations. (23100)
Special School Events

Organizing special events for parents and children was mentioned as another strategy for bringing parents into the school. These include social events like fun fairs and family dances, as well as book fairs and special assemblies.

Sign-up Sheets and Wish Lists

Posting notices requesting parent assistance either in a general way or for specific activities was another strategy mentioned. Volunteer sign-up sheets, displayed in a conspicuous location in the school, were mentioned by one-third of the teachers. One teacher described a "wish list" posted in the staff room, where teachers could indicate what sort of assistance they desired.

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The attitudes toward parent involvement communicated by teachers during the interviews covered a range of issues. Teachers spoke generally of their thoughts regarding the ways in which parents could help, both in the class and at home. They expressed opinions on the role of parents in collaborating with the school, and outlined the benefits they believed resulted from that collaboration. They mentioned potential problems they perceived could be associated with increased levels of parent involvement, and stated their perceptions on how parent involvement initiatives would need to be implemented.
**Parent Support and Help Is Welcomed**

The attitudes most frequently expressed regarding parent involvement related to the support parents could provide at home and the help they might offer in the classroom. Both of these issues were mentioned by over half of the teachers in the sample.

**Parents Could Be More Supportive at Home**

From the teachers' perspective, there is much that many parents could be doing in the home setting to support learning. One of the most commonly mentioned things is that parents take more of an interest in their child's homework assignments. One teacher indicated that she "would like closer supervision of homework" and that parents could provide considerable support simply by "knowing what the assignment was and ensuring it had been completed to some degree of competency or satisfaction" (25100). The desire for more support with homework was echoed in the comments of other teachers. Parents should "become more involved in the work that students bring home" (23100), and set aside time for "working on homework instead of sending the child to the bedroom. It can be a couple of minutes - only a minimal time need be spent with the child" (21100).

Teachers mentioned other ways parents might support learning in the home. These ranged from suggestions as general as providing "encouragement, approval, and help" (17100) to the quite specific list provided by one teacher, which included being there when the student needs support, socially or academically. Giving guidance. Asking the child each night, "What have you done today?" Encouraging them to discuss current events
making them more aware of what is happening in the community. Having parents read to the child and vice versa . . . When areas of concern being negative or positive arise at home that they get on the phone and make a point of mentioning it somewhere that this was going on that there is an area where I am concerned. (21100)

Parents Could Help More in the Classroom

Many teachers stated they would appreciate more parent help in their classes. Reading to and with students was mentioned by several teachers as an area in which they would appreciate support, with parents coming in and reading to them and sitting down and talking to them about it. Not explaining it totally but reading it then talking to them about what they've read. It helps parents, helps the kid because then they both know what's going on and what they should be doing. (15100)

Others spoke of assistance with math.

I don't see why a Mom can't come into my classroom when I'm doing math. I have 29 students and a 40 minute math period. That's not even 2 minutes for each child so that Mom can go around as long as the Mom knows what we're doing and she can help the children too. (17100)

Teacher 24100 indicated that parents could help with organizational issues and boost student productivity.

I know myself I find a lot of times just that it would be nice to have someone who is there to help for organizing and not so much the actual instruction or getting the students started on their tasks but helping having things organized, maybe monitoring. (24100)
Teacher 12100 stated bluntly that "there's a big role for parents in the school." The attitudes expressed by most teachers regarding the support parents could provide in their class affirm this view.

Parents Are Always Welcome

Many, though not all, teachers stated explicitly that parents were always welcome in their classes, and that they had what amounted to an "open door" (15100) policy. In several instances, this "open door" policy was qualified somewhat. A number of teachers indicated that, although they had no reservations about having parents in their class and that parents were welcome at any time, they wanted to have some advance notice of parental visits. Teacher 15100's comments are representative.

I like to know that parents are coming in. I like to have a day's notice sort of thing but I have no qualms about a parent coming in to say, "Hey, can I help you with something or can I come in to watch and see what's going on?" but I kind of insist that they give me a call. (15100)

Parents Are Always Capable of Helping

A number of teachers expressed their opinion that parents were more than able to provide the kind of support and assistance teachers thought would be useful.

What I want the parents to help with they are definitely capable. (21100)

I think that even despite their level of education there is always something somebody can do, that they can help out in some ways. (24100)
One teacher in the Interior site shared his belief some parents were more than capable of helping, but unaware of the kind of support they could provide.

A lot of their ability to help is lying dormant. They don't really know how helpful they could be. They certainly have the potential and the commitment and the desire to help their children. I'm saying it's an untapped reserve. (12100)

**Benefits of Parent Involvement**

In one way or another, half of the teachers in the sample discussed the benefits they believed resulted from increased levels of parent involvement. These benefits affect not only the children, but teachers and parents as well.

Teachers benefit in terms of the increased parental support flowing from enhanced levels of parent awareness. When parents are involved and "on-side" it makes a difference with the kid. All of a sudden the parents can see what's going on in school and they're a lot more sympathetic, a lot more supportive. ... If you've got them on-side, your job is a lot easier. If you don't get them on-side... I think teachers who don't get them on-side have more trouble with home-school relations just because the parents seem cut-off. They're definitely unsympathetic. They don't understand the problems in a classroom. (11100)

Parents benefit by better understanding not only their child's educational program, but also their child's achievements and challenges. Students are the prime beneficiaries, however, developing positive attitudes toward school and learning which contribute to greater success. In the comments which follow, Teacher 11100 expresses his
perception of how a parent’s presence in the classroom influences both the parent and students.

I'd like to have some parents in the classroom because it changes the tone of the classroom. . . Kids go out of their way to try and impress their parents. Kids work better when their parents are in the classroom. Their parents see what they're doing and the parents appreciate what's going on in schools. You get a lot more support from parents who work in the classroom. The parents are better able to understand what's going on and to help the kids. It gives the kids one more resource person that they can go to. You'll find that if a parent comes in that parent is known by more than just their own child. His friends know the parent and there's a change from within too. (11100)

Problems Associated With Parent Involvement

Throughout the interviews, teachers for the most part expressed positive attitudes toward parent involvement in both the home, school, and class setting. Indeed, one teacher went so far as to remark that he didn't "see any down-side" to increased levels of parent involvement. Nevertheless, a number of teachers did articulate what they believed were potentially negative consequences when parents became more involved.

The most frequently mentioned drawback was the added pressure parent involvement puts on the teacher, in terms of the extra time required to plan and organize activities for the parents to do with the students. One of the beginning teachers in the sample indicated that a personal goal was to have more parent involvement, but
these are some areas where I could really get the parents in here to really get involved. (24100)

The extra effort required for planning for parents was also a concern of one of the experienced teachers.

Sometimes I think it's more work for me to get work together for this other person to do, unless it's something specific and they bring something in that they want to do. (17100)

Several teachers observed that parents in the classroom can interrupt or be potentially disruptive. Teacher 22100 described an extreme case.

I have one parent who I have restricted access to the room. She will come at very inconvenient times, and it can be more than once a day. This one has been very hostile and the students are expecting her to come in very angry. They play on it and are not very nice to her and to her son.

Other teachers pointed out that the effect parent involvement has on student attitudes is not always positive. Parents who pay close attention to their child's progress and achievement may have expectations for their children which place undue emphasis on top grades, and put the child under considerable pressure to achieve. Speaking of the attitudes of some of the parents in her school community, one teacher says

...there's a lot of pressures academically in terms of their marks. I've got quite a number of kids who really are upset with themselves if it's not straight A's. There's no ands, ifs or buts, they are really
upset with themselves. It really interferes with their self-concept. They think they are not as good a person. Don't get me wrong. The academics are really important as well but I don't feel to that extent. If their self-image isn't good, or if they're not happy with themselves, what do the marks count for?

Parental attitudes can have another negative effect, as indicated by one of the teachers in the Lower Mainland site.

I truly believe that it affects the student attitude towards school. I have one student whose mother does not have a good attitude, and he has changed in the last three weeks for the worse. Talk at home is influencing his attitude negatively.

Other potential problems mentioned by teachers were negative classroom situations created by parents who did not react well to some of the challenges of dealing with adolescent behaviour, the fact that "you can get to the point where you can't move for all the other bodies" (16100), and that students often try to manipulate parents.

Implementing Parent Involvement Initiatives

A number of teachers also shared their attitudes regarding the conditions which would facilitate implementation of parent involvement initiatives. Stating that they, and many of their colleagues, felt somewhat uncertain about how to increase levels of meaningful parent involvement, several teachers said they believed training programs for teachers were required.

Teachers have to be taught how to use parents too. That's a qualification, definitely. (15100)
I am really interested to know how I can use parents. It's fine to have that philosophy, but at this point, I need strategies. (23100)

Another teacher said his colleagues would not be likely to increase the degree to which they involved parents unless it was mandated by the administration or they had been more thoroughly convinced of the benefits of parent involvement.

... to do it you're going to have to break down some resistances in teachers. Teachers are going to have to see a pay off in this. I don't think a lot of teachers are going to see a pay off initially. The way that teachers are going to change is that the top down are going to say "thou shalt" or they're going to be shown that there's the buy in that's going to enhance their teaching and the children's learning. ... You are going to have to get teachers to buy in. (12100)

Parents, too, in the opinion of some teachers, are not likely to become involved unless they are directly invited and encouraged to do so by schools and teachers. Teacher 16100 noted that

they should be told they are welcome. They should be invited to take part in classroom activities. (16100)

Another said

what they need is to be encouraged and they need a specific invitation. ... It's going to take a concerted effort on the schools' and the school board's (part) to include parents. I know it is. (12100)

What these comments suggest is that teachers believe parent involvement levels will not increase unless there is a substantial commitment on the part of districts, schools, and teachers to involve
parents in their child's education. Teachers need the motivation and training, and parents need encouragement and specific invitations. Increasing parent involvement needs to be put on everyone's agenda.

TEACHER PERCEPTION OF PARENT ATTITUDES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A number of perceptions are regularly restated in teachers' comments regarding the attitude of parents to parental involvement. Teachers generally see parents to be positive and supportive, and willing to do what they can to assist their child with schoolwork. For the most part, teachers believe that parents want to be involved, and feel that involvement is welcomed. Most parents, teachers believe, feel capable of helping with their child's education, either at school or in the home setting, though they may initially feel uncomfortable in new situations or with unfamiliar academic material. Teachers' comments suggest they can play a significant role in helping parents feel comfortable helping at the school or assisting their child at home.

Perceptions of Parents' Attitudes to Involvement at Home

Parents Are Positive and Supportive

The perception that parents are positive and supportive when it comes to involving themselves in their children's education at home is reflected in many of the statements teachers make regarding parental attitudes. Though the amount and kind of support parents are able to provide may be limited by time restrictions imposed by work and family commitments, issues discussed more fully in another section of this chapter, teacher comments indicate a perception that most parents will
The parents come up and say, "I'd like to help. What can I do. I'd like to do this. Can I do this for the school?" They've approached us. We haven't approached them. (13100)

The parents just came in the first week of school or so and said, "I'm at home. Whenever you need help or whenever I can do something, let me know." (14100)

As soon as a major thing comes up - a major research paper on Egypt or something - it's amazing how many parents will jump in and say, "We've got all these books on Egypt. We'd like to give them to the class to use for their library research. (17100)

Only one teacher expressed a belief that some parents had little or no interest in involving themselves with their child's school work. These negative attitudes, he suggested, resulted from a belief that education was "the teacher's job", coupled with a perceived inability to do the work their children were doing.

They think, "I can't do this. I couldn't do it then. I can't do it now. That's the teacher's job. Don't send this home." (13100)

Parents Want to Be Involved

Parents are interested in helping their children, and want to be involved. The most direct statement of this perception came from one of the teachers in the Interior site.
We don't have the problem of having to go out there and drag the parents in or try to get their interest. They are highly interested. (14100)

Similar perceptions were expressed by other teachers, though somewhat less emphatically.

I think parents would like to be involved but what they need is to be encouraged and they need a specific invitation. (12100)

I know I have a number of parents who are very involved because they enjoy it. They want to be involved with what the kids are doing. (15100)

To a certain extent, the perceptions of the teachers cited above are balanced by the comments of another, who observed that parents were perhaps less interested in helping their children as they approached secondary school age.

Especially with me being the grade seven teacher, by the time the kids get to grade seven and I imagine it's even more so in high school, they sort of feel they've been doing this for a number of years now and (they'd) like to cut back a bit now. You get that feeling. (17100)

**Most Parents Feel Capable of Helping**

A third of the teachers explicitly stated their perception that most parents felt capable of assisting their child, though frequently these observations were qualified with remarks related to the need for encouragement or orientation from the teacher. Regarding whether or not parents felt capable of helping, one teacher commented,
Sometimes, no. But most of them, once you make them feel a little more comfortable with the stuff, yes, they do. (15100)

Teacher's comments recognized that not all parents were comfortable assisting their children. The academic content of the children's work, particularly math, was noted by several teachers as intimidating parents.

The topics that we are teaching they are not familiar with. The instructional ways - they feel threatened by teaching the wrong way. The excuse I have been hearing is, "The new math. I don't know the new math." (21100)

You get a lot of parents coming in saying, "I can't do the new math. It isn't the same as when I went to school. . . One thing that really upsets them is the metric system. (11100)

**Perception of Parents' Attitudes to Involvement at School**

Those teachers who commented specifically on parents' attitudes to helping in the classroom were consistent in suggesting that, initially at least, many parents felt uncomfortable in an educational setting.

They're a little nervous the first couple of times they come in. After a while they seem to relax and enjoy themselves after they've been there a while. It's completely strange for them to come into a room full of kids for the first time. (11100)

Other, more experienced, parents do not share these feelings, according to one teacher.

A lot of the moms have been coming in since kindergarten so by the time they arrive there they figure they're not part of the staff but they know what to do and they're not the least bit uncomfortable. (16100)
Parents' comfort level, with respect to assisting in the school setting, may change as the child moves higher into the intermediate grades. Working with older children may make parents less secure. The experiences of one teacher indicated that this was indeed the case.

I've taught from grade three up and parents have been really effective at the grade three/four level and I've asked them at the five/six level to come in and it's, "No, we can't do that." There's a real sense of insecurity. (16100)

The comments of another teacher suggest that parents are likely to feel most comfortable involving themselves in less structured sorts of activities, like field trips, where they can relax and be themselves.

On a field trip it's different because it's more laid back. They can be more natural and they don't have to pretend they're teachers. They just relax and help out with whatever is going on. (11100)

Keeping the comments of this teacher in mind, it is interesting to note that helping with field trips is the most commonly reported form of parent involvement at the classroom level. This finding is discussed more fully under the heading, "Practices of Parent Involvement: Classroom".

**TEACHER PERCEPTION OF TEACHER ATTITUDES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Occasionally, teachers expressed their perceptions regarding the attitude of other teachers to parent involvement. For the most part, these comments were offered as teachers elaborated or digressed during their answers to other questions. The number of statements related to this topic is not large in number, and the various comments do not
suggest any particular trend or pattern of response. However, they are interesting for what they suggest about teacher attitudes toward parent involvement, and for that reason are reported below.

One teacher stated a perception that the teachers in his school were positive and open toward parent involvement, though he prefaced his comments by briefly describing some problems with parent helpers who had worked in the school several years previously.

Now it's a really good situation. It's very open, and it's not like, "Oh, oh. There's the parents; there's the teachers." (13100)

The belief that teachers generally see parents as partners in children's education was stated by one teacher in the Interior site, while another observed that teachers seemed to be welcoming teachers into the schools more now than in the past. However, he noted later, he "didn't see much movement for parents coming in at the intermediate grades." (16100)

This sentiment was restated by another teacher who commented that "the primary teachers are more likely to go out of their way to ask for parent help." (11100) Other comments made by the same teacher qualify this remark to some extent. Noting that the differences in the way primary and intermediate teachers perceive parent involvement are not "black and white", he continues

I don't think think you can say that primary teachers and intermediate teachers view parents differently. It's just in our school the way it is. (11100)

In the opinion of several teachers, teacher attitudes toward parent involvement may be less than positive because parents are viewed as potential critics of teacher practice. Others may feel threatened from a union perspective, seeing parents doing work that teachers should be
paid to do. For a variety of reasons, one teacher suggests that his colleagues are going to be reluctant to "buy in" to the notion of increasing levels of parent involvement. Administrators who want to accomplish this goal will

have to break down some resistance in teachers. Teachers are going to have to see a payoff in this (parent involvement). I don't think a lot of teachers are going to see a payoff initially. (12100)

PRACTICES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT: CLASSROOM

Based on the responses of teachers in this sample, there is little direct parent involvement in the classrooms of upper intermediate teachers. Over half of the teachers reported that no parents had helped in their classroom since the beginning of that school year, and two stated explicitly that they don't solicit parent help for the classroom. Those teachers who did report having parent involvement in the classroom used parents to assist with instruction and supervision, serve as resource people, or help with a variety of classroom tasks. Parents also were involved in the role of classroom observer. Among the teachers who reported having no parents involved in their class, a significant number did indicate that they has used parents as classroom helpers at different times and for various reasons in previous years.

Current Year

Assistance with Field Trips

A majority of teachers mentioned recruiting parents as field trip helpers, though their comments suggest that even though the purpose of
the field trip may have been curricular in nature, they did not view this as a form of classroom involvement. Since this type of involvement is with the students of the class and is frequently related to a learning activity, it is included in this section. One teacher indicated that having parental assistance on field trips was

really important for me because I just can't be with thirty kids in a situation like that. (17100)

Though parents are often used for help with the supervision and transportation of students on field trips, several teachers elaborated on how they use parents to help facilitate the learning goals they have set out for their students. For one, parents

are not just a means of transportation, but I use them as an assistant with a small group of students. They are responsible to help the children learn. (21100)

Another sometimes preconferences with parents to increase their involvement and effectiveness.

I'll have about eight different groups and I'll have a worksheet the kids will have to do. I'll let the parents have it before hand and involve them. Have them in an evening before we go and just go over it with them so they know what I am looking for and they are free to add extras and things that they can do, which they really enjoy. I'll say to them, "The more you can give to them the better it is." (15100)
Assistance with Instruction and Supervision

A number of teachers reported involving parents in their classes to assist them with instruction and supervision. With respect to instruction, parents were used in a number of ways. One teacher mentioned having them help

"with a small group of children having trouble with a specific skill or something like that." (14100).

Another teacher uses parents to instruct the whole class in certain aspects of arts and crafts, where the parents have greater interest and expertise.

I've had people come in and do an art unit with my guys and I'm just there, and they're doing their - whether it's glass etching or just a different way of looking at art. (17100)

In terms of supervision, two teachers reported using parents to monitor and assist students who were working in the school computer lab, away from the regular class.

Arranged Observations

One of the teachers in the Interior site indicated she involved parents in a formal series of classroom observations. Parents were invited, one at a time, to observe in the classroom, and were provided with a format outlining things they might look for. Before and after the observation she has a short conference with the parents to provide an opportunity for discussion. The focus of each observation is performance of their child.
When the parents come in to watch . . . I have an activity sheet for them that they use for answering questions. What are you looking for? Is your child participating in this? Is he putting his hand up, answering questions, things like that? What they should be looking for. I go through this with them before hand so they're not sort of looking at the sheet before hand and trying to figure out what it says while we're starting. Then afterwards I'll sit down with them for five or ten minutes . . . then go over it with them - what we've done and what they've seen. (15100)

Other Forms of Involvement

Assistance with extracurricular class activities, specifically volleyball, was mentioned by one teacher as an instance where parent involvement was very useful. Another mentioned having a parent help in the classroom doing a variety of assigned tasks.

Previous Years

Most of the teachers who indicated they had had no parents in the classroom during the current year did describe ways in which they had involved parents in the past. Generally, most of these forms of involvement were of the "assistance with supervision and instruction" variety, either in the regular class, on field trips, or with special projects and activities. Teachers mentioned having parents help with arts and crafts, newspaper and play production, cooking ethnic meals in the class, and science projects. They reported involving parents in assisting individuals and small groups in math and other subjects, and in having parents read to and with children. In addition, parents also helped with classroom displays and bulletin boards and extra-curricular activities.
PRACTICES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT: HOME

All of the teachers in the sample reported involving parents in the home setting. With one exception, use of a homework book, there was little consistency in the type of parental home involvement initiated by teachers. Few teachers reported actively engaging parents in learning activities in the home, the type of involvement generally accepted as being most effective in improving student achievement. In most cases, the parent involvement strategies reported by teachers consisted of reviewing work the child had completed or assisting with the implementation of expectations related to homework completion or reading/study times.

As noted above, use of a homework book was the only parent involvement strategy employed by a majority of teachers. The way in which the homework book was used was described clearly by one teacher.

The homework sheet has the subject, the assignment, and a space for the parent to sign. I send them home with the pupil and he brings it back the next day when it's been signed. Now the parents have seen that he's got homework. They've seen the homework and they've signed it or they've explained why it hasn't been done.

(11100)

Most of the teachers who used homework books indicated that they did not do so with all of their students, but only with those who were not completing the assigned work. They believed this was an effective way to involve parents and help hold students accountable.

Encouraging home reading with children was another way a number of teachers reported they involved parents. In several cases, this went beyond general encouragement to read. Informing parents of strategies
for selecting appropriate reading materials was mentioned by one teacher, while another reported sharing techniques parents could use to have their child build their reading vocabulary and improve their reading skills.

Several teachers also reported communicating information regarding appropriate expectations for study times and for the completion of homework assignments. These included setting a regular time for homework completion, studying, or reading, hints on creating an effective study environment, and suggestions on ways parents could look at their children's homework.

Meeting with individual parents to discuss strategies to facilitate student learning at home was reported by three teachers. In two cases, academic concerns were the main focus, while in the other social considerations prompted the meeting. One teacher mentioned including school based resource people like the learning assistance teacher and principal in the discussion.

Two teachers indicated they used assignments requiring parental input as a strategy for involving parents. The degree of parent involvement, however, appeared in at least one of the cases to be somewhat superficial.

They will have a science project. There will be an information package that goes home. (Parents) read and sign it. It can be a one month assignment. That's one way they're included. (22100)

In the social studies program a parent/student project is done at home, where the child is to select one topic. It is signed by the parents. The parents are there not to do it but to act as facilitator. (21100)
Other parent involvement strategies were mentioned by individual teachers. These include having the parents review and sign completed units of work.

What I do is staple all the math and reading homework in a big thick package, and they have to sign it and when they sign it they have to look through it and see what they have done for that month. (13100)

The teacher cited above also mentioned having a stamp that says, "Parent, please sign," which he used on poorly done assignments. His experience was that when students took the poorly done work home to be signed by their parents, a lot of the time they had to redo it. Another teacher talked about sending "worksheets home with certain children and having the parents work at the worksheets with their kids." (12100). The final parent involvement strategy mentioned by an individual teacher was using parents as editors of student writing.

PERCEPTION OF OBSTACLES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Teachers in this study cite many of the logistical and phenomenological barriers suggested by Fullan (1982) and other researchers (Epstein and Becker, 1982; Moles, 1982, 1987; Ashton and Webb, 1986) as obstacles to greater parent involvement. These include a lack of time and opportunity, inadequate knowledge, skills and awareness, as well as a range of parent, teacher, and student attitudes.
Lack of Time and Opportunity

Most frequently mentioned was the lack of time and opportunity resulting from both parents working outside the home, family responsibilities, and the extracurricular commitments of the children themselves. Teachers also mentioned time constraints influencing their willingness to involve parents.

Parents' Work Limits Opportunity

"The biggest thing is that both parents work" (16100) was the response of one teacher when asked what things prevented parents from doing more to help their children learn. Clearly this sentiment was shared by others, as fully three-fourths of teachers in the sample commented on parents' work commitments as an obstacle to greater levels of parent involvement.

Developing this theme, the re-entry of women into the work force as their children matured was seen by one teacher as a reason why fewer parents helped children at the intermediate level.

It seems that traditionally mothers do most of the helping in schools and around the grade seven year a lot of them start to look for part-time jobs and things and are not as readily available as they have been in other years. (17100)

This thought is supported by the experience of another teacher, who describes a situation in which he had arranged for a parent helper and "shortly after that she got a job and wasn't able to come in." (11100)
Family Responsibilities Limit Opportunity

The demands that family responsibilities impose on a parent's time were also mentioned a factor restricting parent involvement both in the school and at home. The obligation to look after younger children prevents some parents from volunteering their time to assist in an older child's class. "In some cases there are younger children at home so Mom can't get out" (16100). Also, parents with several children may not be able to spend the amount of time they would like with each child because "when they get home (from work) they have to deal with more than one child" (21100).

Activities Outside The Home Limit Opportunity

The involvement of students in activities outside the home was another factor noted by teachers as limiting the amount of time parents had to spend with their children on school related issues.

We do have a high percentage of moms who don't (work), but then they too are rushing their children off to piano lessons or dance lessons . . . it's really hard to just, in a relaxed situation, sit down and say, "O.K., what do you have and how can I help?" It's not a matter of let's squeeze it in in the next twenty minutes because then we have to go and do this. (14100)

Teacher Time Is Limited

Epstein and Becker (1982) cite a lack of time to plan programs and communicate with parents as logistical barriers reported by teachers. Several teachers in this sample gave voice to similar perceptions. Both experienced and beginning teachers cited the extra work time needed to
plan, organize, and communicate as a limiting factor in their decisions to involve parents in instructional activities.

Sometimes I think it's more work for me to get work together for this other person to do, unless it's something specific and they bring something in that they want to do (17100).

I don't have a reason not to want them. So far it has just been a lack of the availability of time for planning (24100).

Clearly, the demands teachers perceive on both their own time and that of parents figure significantly as a barrier to increased parent involvement.

**Lack of Knowledge and Awareness**

Another of the logistical barriers mentioned by teachers was what Fullan (1982) describes as the lack "of know-how about what activities or forms of parent involvement would be most effective" (p. 203). A significant number of teachers saw this as a factor hindering parent involvement, and it is interesting to note that several teachers indicated it was their own lack of "know-how", as much as the parents', which was responsible.

**Teachers Do Not Know Enough About Involving Parents**

On several occasions, teachers expressed a desire to learn more about ways to effectively involve parents. Their comments gave the distinct impression that, although increasing levels of parent involvement was a valuable goal, they were not sure of the strategies they might use to accomplish it. Expressed in different ways by various
teachers, this sentiment was most clearly given voice by one of the beginning teachers in the sample:

They (parents) probably all have the same concerns as I do. They don't know how to do it (23100).

Parent Lack the Necessary Awareness, Knowledge, and Skill

Some teachers believe that parents are limited in their ability to assist their children by not knowing what their child is doing in school, or what the expectations are. For one teacher, a lack of awareness resulting from poor communication is the main barrier to parents helping more.

I would imagine that probably the biggest thing is just a lack of communication. If parents don't know what is going on, I would imagine that they tend to feel isolated from the school system. Whereas if the communication was open more, they might be more apt to volunteer their services. (24100)

Responding similarly to the same question, another teacher felt a major barrier was parents "just being aware of what's going on; aware of what a school's expectations are and the teacher's expectations are" (17100).

Although many parents may have a general awareness of what the child is studying, it may not be enough to allow them any sort of meaningful involvement. Stating her opinion that it was a lack of specific knowledge about what their child was doing that hindered many parents in their efforts to help, one teacher explained the barrier as

Not knowing what the kids are doing. The communication between the teacher and the parent. I know he's doing a science unit on space. I don't refer to that as knowing. What are they doing on
that? They're doing a station study. What are the stations? What are the things they have to choose? (15100)

One of the teachers, the parent of a grade seven student himself, finds it easy to sympathize with parents' lack of awareness regarding what the children are doing in school.

If I wasn't in grade seven, teaching grade seven, I know I'd have a whole lot more trouble knowing what he's doing because I'm sure a lot of kids say, "What did you do at school today?" "Nothing . . ." and that's it, where they might have done a host of things and if it isn't something that particularly catches them, they really got excited about it, or if they're feeling glum or whatever, then you won't hear about it (17100).

Knowing what the child is studying may not be enough. Some teachers expressed their perception that parents felt reluctant to assist their child because they

feel there is a different methodology today and that they are undermining what the teacher does if they help the kid at home. (25100)

Similar thoughts were expressed by another teacher:

The topics we are teaching, they are not familiar with the instructional ways. They feel threatened by teaching the wrong way (21100).

Closely related to this view is the perception of another teacher that when parents try to help students in ways which differ from the teacher's methodology,
the student's basically tell their parents they don't know what they are talking about or, "No, you don't understand the assignment," or, "No, that's not what she means," and frustrations set in really quick and then they basically say, "Oh well, go do it yourself" (14100).

Other may parents lack the strategies to communicate and work effectively with their children, and in some situations may be misled by them into believing there is nothing they can do.

I think in some cases the parents just don't know. They think by saying to the child, "Are you finished your homework?", and the child lies and says, Yes." They trust . . . They just don't know the techniques they need to ensure that the child is actually ..., the supervision techniques I guess is what I am talking about" (25100)

**Parent Attitudes**

Teachers see a range of parent attitudes inhibiting involvement. These range from feelings of intimidation, to beliefs that educating children is the teacher's job, to attitudes regarding children's growing independence.

**Parents Feel Threatened, Insecure, and Intimidated**

One-third of teachers expressed the belief that parents are intimidated by schools, teachers, or curriculum, and find direct involvement threatening. This may be the result of previous negative experiences, or of an outdated view of schools which no longer matches the reality, or of a simple lack of unfamiliarity with either the system or the work their children are doing. These perceptions echo the findings of Moles (1982) who talked about the "different cultural backgrounds" of parents reducing the probability of involvement.
Generally they're intimidated by the system because they haven't been brought into it (12100).

The classroom is a different environment for them. It's completely strange to them and they feel uncomfortable (11100).

... possibly because of the way school has been previously they might feel threatened, that it's not their place (21100).

... lots of parents feel threatened in the intermediate by the academic work (25100).

... if there is that lack of communication they feel that sort of alienation from the school system, like they are not-, maybe they feel they are not welcome or they are not capable or something along that line (24100).

Educating Children Is The Job Of Over-Paid, Under-Worked Teachers

Contrasting sharply with these views of how parent attitudes work to limit involvement are the perceptions of one of the teachers in the Interior site. His view is that, at least in his school,

the attitude toward teachers here is that we're under-worked, over-paid, and that's their attitude so that's why, at least that's my belief as to why we don't have many parent helpers" (13100).

Children Are Old Enough To Look After Themselves

Parents may also be expecting their children will need less and less support as they move into the intermediate grades, and are willing to allow the child a growing independence.
In grade seven they're working part time and expecting their kid to be able to take care of themselves (17100).

Parent involvement has a tendency to fall off as the children get older. Parents too feel that they should be able to do more by themselves. (16100)

**Teacher Attitudes**

The second most frequently mentioned obstacle to parent involvement, following lack of time and opportunity, was teacher attitudes.

**Teachers Shut Parents Out**

One inhibiting attitude mentioned by several teachers was the tendency on the part of the profession to discount the parents' role as educators and shut them out of the schooling process. This attitude was stated most explicitly in the following comments:

It's my personal belief that teachers became too professional, too quick to lock the parents out because after all they were the professionals and the parents weren't. Many of the problems we have today are with public relations and go back to the fact that parents have not felt welcome in the schools. You're just a mother or a father - how could you possibly know what the professionals do? (16100).

Another teacher talks about the wall that he believes teachers put up between themselves and parents.
I think there is an informal barrier that gets set up. We teach your kids and during interview day we'll talk to you and if your kid's a problem we'll phone you (12100).

**Teachers are Defensive about Practice and Curriculum**

Teacher attitudes of defensiveness and insecurity in the presence of parents were expressed by a number of teachers. Having parents come into the classroom may be quite threatening for some teachers, for it exposes them and their practices to the scrutiny of what they believe are potential critics.

If I was going to generalize, probably, the attitude of a lot of teachers is defensive. I think they see the parent as potentially being critical of something they're doing in terms of what they're teaching their child or how they're disciplining their child (12100). Implicit in this attitude is an undercurrent of teacher uncertainty regarding selected classroom practice, and that by having parents in teachers are opening themselves up to criticism.

At another point in the interview the teacher quoted above notes that the attitude of "defensiveness" is not one which rests solely with individual teachers, but is endemic to the education system.

I think one of the problems in education is that we always seem to be somewhere on a pendulum as to what the values of what we're trying to teach children, what concepts we're trying to teach or what methods we're trying to use. We always seem to be a little out of sync with society and I think that makes our system a little defensive (12100).
This tone of defensiveness and insecurity is present in the remarks of one of the less experienced teachers in the sample, who implies that before he begins to use parents in his classroom he needs to gain greater confidence in curriculum and classroom management.

I am still working on curriculum and discipline. I am not sure I could use them to fullest advantage (23100).

These comments reaffirm the findings Lortie presents in *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (1975). Lortie makes frequent mention of the uncertainty teachers experience regarding whether or not they are using the most appropriate strategies or teaching the right things. Almost two-thirds of the teachers Lortie surveyed had difficulty assessing whether or not they were doing an effective job, and that uncertainties in this regard "complicate the craft of teaching and hamper the earning of psychic rewards" (p. 159). Teachers not confident in their ability or practice are almost certain to be less likely to expose themselves to situations in which their professional decisions can be held up for potential scrutiny or criticism. Ashton and Webb's (1986) conclusions were essentially similar: teachers are likely to limit interactions which have potentially negative outcomes. Power's (1985) findings, noted earlier, indicating that some parents perceived teachers as being less effective than the teachers themselves thought they were, may provide some justification for teacher's defensiveness and insecurity.

Uncertainties which result from not knowing, on a personal basis, the parents of students is mentioned as another obstacle to involving them more fully.
Part of it is that I'm new this year, M.'s new this year. We don't
know the parents. Maybe that's why we haven't invited them
(11100).

**Intermediate Students Should Be Independent**

In the preceding section, teachers' perception of parents' attitudes
regarding students' growing independence, and need for independence,
were noted as a factor which worked to reduce the level of parent
involvement. Strikingly similar to this are the views of one grade seven
teacher.

I find that at the grade seven level my big push with them is to have
them more responsible for what they're doing and for them to be
more independent in making decisions and things like that - about
their work and what not. Specifically at the grade seven level I
don't know in what ways I should be dragging the parents in to the
classroom to help out (14100).

Teachers, too, perceive that upper intermediate students should be able
to do things on their own, and do not have the same need for parent
assistance.

**Teacher Behaviour**

**Teacher Behaviour Excludes Parents**

The attitudes of defensiveness, insecurity, and uncertainty
discussed above may manifest themselves in teacher behaviours which
have the effect of shutting out parents. One teacher notes that

Teachers as a rule get very insular. In the staff rooms they talk
among themselves. They talk about teaching and I don't think
parents are made to feel particularly welcome in that environment.
away from the school, that perception is not universal. Other teachers
that a significant number of students would prefer their parents stayed
Interestingly, although the comments noted above clearly suggest
don't so usually the parents are aware of that to (17100).
Some of the students don't want their parents there. They just
seven a lot of the kids don't want Mom or Dad there (16100).
in the upper grades too you have to be careful because around grade
old enough to come to school and do my own thing. (21100).
The students don't want their parents in. I get that feeling. "I am
number of teachers.
want their parent in their classroom. This was stated succinctly by a
of the teachers interviewed mentioned that some children simply do not
teachers perceive work against increased parental involvement. A quarter
previous paragraph figures prominently in student attitudes which
The theme of increased student independence mentioned in the
Intermediary Students Want To Be Independent
Student Attitudes

comments previously cited.
That teachers believe many parents feel this way is evidence by teacher
being welcome and not belonging. To feelings of alienation and isolation.
Clearly, this sort of teacher behaviour is likely to lead to a sense of not
time (12100).
leave others out. I think parents probably feel out of it a lot of the
It's so easy for teachers to fall into discussions with teachers and
in the sample expressed their belief that students at the upper intermediate level enjoyed having a parent in the classroom, though several did note that occasionally this was preceded by an initial period of adjustment and embarrassment.

**PERCEPTION OF PARENT TEACHER RELATIONS**

Parent teacher relations are positive with almost all parents. That perception was expressed by two-thirds of teachers in this sample. It is clear from their comments that these teachers believe parents are supportive of what they are doing, and that they feel comfortable in their interactions with them. Despite this positive perception of overall parent teacher relations, most teachers noted that this state of affairs did not apply to all parents in the school community.

In contrast to the views of the majority, the comments of several teachers portray the relationship between parents and teachers in a much less favourable light. These teachers believe that parent teacher interactions are minimal, are frequently characterized by underlying currents of tension and insecurity, and may bear a closer resemblance to a "stand-off" than a partnership. Both groups of teachers believe that parents share their views.

**Parent Teacher Relations are Positive and Supportive**

As was noted in the preceding paragraph, most teachers believe that there is a positive and supportive relationship between parents and teachers. When asked how they would describe this relationship, a substantial number of teachers responded with phrases like "very good"
(21100), "great" (22100), "a lot of support" (23100), though they frequently qualified their remarks to clarify that this description did not apply universally.

In general, me and my parents - excluding one - great. (22100)

I would say we have a good relationship. There's good lines of communication, and if you were to phone all of the parents, the overall results would be quite positive. I could name a couple who would have nothing good to say about it, but you'll find that at any school. (16100)

You always hear stories of parents who are not (supportive) in one way or other, but I think generally that the parents tend to like what they see happening in the school, and I think they're - again generally, fairly supportive of what they see and quite happy with what is going on. (24100)

This sense of a large group of supportive parents and a smaller number of parents at logger heads with the school or teacher was present in a number of the interviews. One teacher in the Interior site noted that "there are those who tend to want to question absolutely everything and aren't satisfied with anything. They're certainly in the minority" (14100). A teacher in a Lower Mainland school expressed a similar perception, suggesting that although there was "a strong core of really good, solid, supporting parents" there were those with "very strong feelings against the school" (25100).

A number of teachers indicated that parent-teacher relationships, though for the most part cordial and friendly, might better be described in business-like or professional terms.
For most there is a congenial attitude toward one another, but there is a line you don't cross. It's a business line, I guess - a business relationship. You work together, you have to help each other but at the same time, business is business. It's like a teacher and a student. You want to be a friend, but at the same time there is a line you don't cross. You have to keep it a working relationship. (13100)

Professional - it's a professional relationship, I think . . . professional in the sense that there is no - there is a common goal, but there is no real friendship, I guess I can use for lack of a better word. It seems to me that each tries to keep their distance. (24100)

In one teacher's view, the good relations which generally exist between parents and teachers are getting even better. The relationship is improving because "parents don't feel as threatened any more by teachers as they used to, so that they will come into the school and they will talk." (25100)

**Parent Teacher Relations Are Minimal and Often Strained**

Contrasting with the perceptions described above are those of a minority of teachers in the sample who believe that parent teacher relationships are, for the most part, minimal, and in a significant number of cases negatively affected by underling tensions and hostilities. One teacher went so far as to characterize the parent teacher relationship, in general, as "a stand-off."

I have your kid during the day. Don't comment on what I'm doing unless you're going to come in and see - the teacher's attitude. And the parent says he's coming home and complaining the whole time.
"What are you doing to my kid?" Sort of that - there's this side and this side to the argument. (15100)

Because of the time and amount of contact needed to get to know one another, some teachers believe that positive relations between teachers and parents do not have much chance to develop. It is difficult to establish anything more than an "arms-length" relationship because teachers don't see parents a lot and parents don't see teachers a whole lot except in little snippets of one or two or three minute occasions. You never get past the niceties of, "Hello. How are you?" (17100)

When parents and teachers do meet there is, according to one teacher, "a getting acquainted period where things are awkward on both sides." (11100). There is also, according to another, a shared "tension, sort of an insecurity between the two. They have the same sort of feeling." (23100)

For teachers, this tension and insecurity may stem from feelings of defensiveness about curriculum or classroom practice.

I think they see parents as potentially being critical of something they're doing in terms of what they're teaching their child or how they're disciplining their child, and that's how the system has sort of evolved. (12100).

Parents, on the other hand, may initially be uncomfortable with and even intimidated by the prospect of communicating with their child's teacher because

until they meet (the teacher) the only thing the parent has to go on is the report from the pupil. The pupil's looking at you through a
pupil's eyes and is taking that impression to the parents and the parent's get the impression from the pupil's viewpoint. (11100)

There may also be a certain degree of emotional stress involved in communicating with the teacher, which colours the nature of the interaction.

My personal observation is that if I've got a parent in they've usually thought about it over night. I think the parent has to crank himself up to come in and quite often when they've done it they're emotionally quite high. (12100)

In a similar fashion, the interaction might be influenced by negative feelings which have been building for weeks or months without being dealt with.

I think parents come to the school quite often with frustrations accumulated over a period of time. Then they talk to teachers after they've built up a head of steam. (12100)

Another factor which might make establishing a positive parent teacher relationship more challenging is the difficulty some parents have in seeing teachers as "real people." When teachers don't live up to parent's high expectations, parents feel let down, and may develop negative feelings.

Parents have very high expectations of teachers and if they find a little mole it shatters it. A lot of people can't deal with the shattering of teachers. It's hard for people to see teachers as real people. You don't see them very much for that relationship to grow. (17100)
Teacher Perception of Parents' View of Parent Teacher Relationships

Whether teachers believed that parents and teachers enjoyed a good relationship, or whether they perceived the relationship as minimal and strained, they generally felt that parents shared their views. When asked how parents would describe parent teacher relationships, several teachers answered with exactly the same phrase or sentence they had given themselves in answering the same question. Other typical responses were, "My parents would feel the same," (21100) "Maybe the same way," (23100) "I think the same way," (13100) and "Similar." (12100)

TEACHER PARENT COMMUNICATION

Throughout the interviews, teachers made a range of observations expressing their attitudes and perceptions regarding communication between home and school. For some issues, such as the nature of the interactions and strategies for communication, there was a good deal of consistency in teacher response. Other aspects of teacher parent communication were commented on by only one teacher. These individual comments, when taken together, are for the most part complementary, though in one instance the views of one teacher directly contradict those of another.

Most of the communication which takes place between parents and teachers is problem oriented. This perception was voiced consistently in the statements teachers made regarding the occasions parents communicated with them or when they contacted parents. The focus of the interaction is frequently a problem or a concern which one or the
other would like to resolve. Problems with behaviour or academics stand out as the main reasons teachers initiate contact with parents, though the desire to report positive achievements or to discuss student progress were mentioned as well. Parent initiated communication, in the teachers' view, usually results from a concern regarding classroom activities or curriculum, student achievement, or questions regarding assignments.

Teacher Initiated Communication

Reasons for Communication with Parents

Teachers' comments regarding their contact with parents, outside the mandated reporting procedures and parent-teacher interviews, centred around problems they had been having with a particular child, though some teachers did mention contacting parents to report on positive aspects of a child's performance. Concerns with the quality of work a student was handing in, incomplete assignments, or behaviour problems were typically mentioned as reasons for initiating contact.

Most of my calls are in regard to discipline or a student not doing homework. (23100)

I think a lot of the contact is done in crisis situations. Your child is not performing up to a standard or is misbehaving. (12100)

Yes, specifically (I call) if there seems to be a real change in the child's behaviour, or if there's a spell when they're not getting their work done, or if they're handing in work that is not up to their standard. (14100)
All but three of the teachers in the sample spoke of situations in which
the communication they initiated with parents was prompted by a
specific behavioural problem or academic concern.

On the other hand, several teachers mentioned that they initiated
contact with parents when a student's accomplishments were
particularly positive.

If someone is doing a really super job I'll phone them (the parents)
up. (15100)

Usually the only time I call parents is on a really positive note or a
really negative note. Your child has done excellent today. Your
child has really blown it today, and this is what he or she has done.
(13100)

Two teachers reported communication with parents which was not
prompted by any particular concerns or by a child's positive
accomplishments, but simply to let parents know how their child was
doing. There is a suggestion in the comments of one of these teachers
that this kind of call does not happen often, and is of a somewhat lower
priority.

Generally, it's just more or less to inform them of how things are
going. It's not so much my looking for information from them. It's
just to let them know how their particular child is doing. (24100)

Sometimes I phone just to say they are doing fine. Usually those
are harder to get around to. They are good to do if you can get
them done. (17100)
Teachers reported that a regular part of their communication home was encouraging parents to visit or phone them. To this end, several teachers mentioned giving parents their home phone number so that it would be easier to get hold of them.

I make my phone number available at the beginning of the year so that if anyone's having troubles and they don't know what they're doing, the parent, feel free to call. (17100)

I explain to parents that my door is always open. I also encourage them with a letter that goes home. (21100)

I've made a point to say, . . . "Come in anytime, phone anytime if an assignment comes home that looks unusual or strange or if you or your child don't understand. Feel free to phone." (14100)

Means of Communication

The telephone is by far the most frequently mentioned means of communication with parents. The responses of most teachers suggest that they phone parents only when they think it necessary, with only one reporting using the telephone as part of a systematic communication strategy. Other communication strategies teachers mentioned using include interim reports, notes written in student planners, curriculum overviews, interviews at the school, and home visits. One teacher reported making a point of talking with parents whenever an opportunity presented itself

If see them in the hallway I stop and have a little chat. If the opportunity is there to speak to them I'll take it.

A lot of parents' kids play on the school volleyball team and I make a point of going over to talk to them. I keep in touch. (22100)
Parent Initiated Communication

Reasons for Communication with Teachers

The reason teachers most frequently reported for parents initiating contact with them was questions regarding assignments. Parents questioned teachers both on expectations and methodology. The comments of the following teacher are representative.

I have had parents call up and say, "Help, we're doing lowest common multiples. Johnny hasn't got the least clue what's going on and I haven't done this in 15 years. Can you get me started? Once you get me started it will all come back." That happens. Or someone phones and wants to know, "So-and-so has lost a sheet that says what your expectations are. In this research unit, what should he or she have in it? Table of contents, bibliography, etc." I get phone calls about that sort of stuff. (17100)

Questions and concerns parents have regarding curriculum or classroom activities were mentioned by one-third of the teachers as the focus of parent-initiated communication. Several teachers reported situations in which parents were not hesitant to question something they had said or done.

A lot of the parents will come in and say, "Why is this marked wrong?" (13100)

I had one episode early on in the year with a parent who, through a letter, expressed a concern about something I had said. (14100)

Social studies at the beginning of the year I did hemispheres. I switched it around on the time and the dates and one of the dads phoned me up ... (15100)
Questions and concerns about student achievement were also reported by a similar number of teachers as the reason parents initiated contact.

... they say to me ... "I'm not sure how my son is doing in reading. Will you tell me what you think?" So I can do some tests and have them in and say, "Here you are. No problem. Everything is fine." They feel relieved. (17100)

I do have phone calls and they'll say, "This came home and I signed such-and-such a test. How can I help? What's the next big assignment so I can keep an eye open?" (14100)

Parents also contact teachers to share information about their children. One teacher noted that, when parents did this, it made a real difference to his level of involvement with the parents over the course of the year.

The ones I have the most involvement with are the ones who made a specific attempt at the beginning of the year to talk with me and let me know what they thought their child needed for the year and that personalized the relationship. (12100)

**Individual Observations**

Teachers stated a variety of general observations regarding communication between parents and teachers, ranging from thoughts on whose responsibility it was to communicate, to factors which influence how effective the communication is.

One teacher noted that most contact seemed to be teacher initiated, which fits with the views of another who stated there was an "afraidness to communicate" (15100) on the part of parents. The
responsibility for initiating and maintaining good communication was felt by one teacher to reside with the parent.

Parents might feel it is the teacher's responsibility (to communicate). I am trying to make it known that it is the parent's role. (21100)

Another teacher was quite clear in suggesting that good parent teacher communication was the teacher's responsibility, and that teachers had to make more of an effort in this regard.

... teachers need to communicate with (parents) more. It is one of my jobs to let the parents know. (15100)

Teachers made a number of comments related to what they perceived influenced the effectiveness of communication. One teacher suggested that conversations with parents had to deal with the positive as well as the negative, and that it was important to include students in the discussions. Generally speaking, teachers comments reflect the view that communication with parents is important, and can have positive results.

REPORTED CHANGES IN ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The findings discussed in this section are derived from a coding of the Time 2 teacher interviews. For reasons outlined in Chapter 3, the changes which are noted are changes reported by the teachers themselves, in response to a direct question from the interviewer.
regarding whether or not changes had occurred in a specific area during that school year. The reported changes are discussed on a teacher by teacher basis.

**Teacher 11100**

Teacher 11100 reported a number of changes related to patterns of parent-teacher communication and to his perception of shifts in parent attitudes to parent involvement. On several occasions in the second interview, he attributes these changes to the parent involvement intervention.

**Changes in Practices of Parent Involvement: Home**

Two changes occurred in Teacher 11100's strategies for involving parents, both of which relate directly to communication with parents. The first is the implementation of a program of regular phone calls to parents.

After a meeting at this school board office through this Simon Fraser program I started a telephone log, phoning parents on a regular basis whether it's something good or bad to say. (11100)

In the second instance, Teacher 11100 discussed a class newspaper his students prepared, outlining a variety of class projects and activities. Intended in part as a means of providing increased information to parents regarding what was happening in class, the publication of the newspaper did not become a regular event, as he had hoped. Only one issue was prepared and distributed, and that was in the final months of the year.
Changes in Parent Teacher Communication

According to Teacher 11100, there was little communication between the parents of his students and himself in the first months of the school year. He was new at that school, he said, and "At the beginning of the year the parents stayed away in droves." It wasn't until the New Year "that the parents started coming in," he reports. When asked what contributed to that change, Teacher 11100 responded, "Like being involved in the program, I think."

Following the intervention, Teacher 11100 reported that he noticed a difference in the number of parents coming in to talk with him or calling him to discuss matters related to their child's program or progress. This observation was restated several times over the course of the interview.

I see more of the grade seven parents in and I've got a six-seven split. I see more of the grade six-seven parents than I have before. They're more willing to phone and talk to you, it seems to me. (11100)

There have been more parents phoning and asking specific questions about assignments. "How can I help?" (11100)

Teacher 11100 indicated that he observed positive changes in student behaviour and attitudes which he attributes to the improved communication between home and school. Students were, he perceived, taking more responsibility for their own learning and better upholding their obligations as students.
Yeah, the kids are better about taking stuff (home) than they were at the beginning because now you have parents phone and find out what they’ve missed. (11100)

I’ve had more kids willing to ask for help than at the very beginning of the year. I think support at home. The parents are asking me, "What do you expect of the kids?" (11100)

Perception of Parent Attitudes to Parent Involvement

Parents, in the view of Teacher 11100, can be categorized as belonging to one of two groups: those who "are really actively involved and have a good working relationship with the teacher" and those "who don't get involved with the school and the working relationship there is pretty tenuous." When asked to reflect on whether he believed this had changed at all over the course of the school year, he responded

Yeah, I think the first group is getting bigger. Because of the program more parents are getting involved. (11100)

At other points in the interview, he provides examples to support his perception that parent attitudes to involvement in their child’s education have shifted somewhat.

I think, well, this year more parents found out, "Yeah, there are concrete things that I can do,” and they’re doing them. I’ve noticed the difference in equipment, for instance. Nagging kids to bring in that and parents found out about this and the equipment was there. (11100)

Also, the two final comments cited under the heading Teacher Parent Communication suggest shifts in parent attitudes. Parents, in the eyes of Teacher 11100, realized that an increased level of involvement can
make a difference to their child's success. As a result, he believes they are more willing to become involved and there is increased support at home.

Teacher 12100

Teacher 12100 mentioned several changes which he believed had occurred over the course of the year in his attitudes toward parent involvement and his practices of communication with parents. Interestingly, in the interview he seems almost at pains to minimize the significance of these changes, using qualifying phrases like, "A little bit, yeah. A little bit, and "Again, a little bit but not very much," when he mentions changes which had occurred. In reading the interview transcript, one gets a sense that Teacher 12100 felt reporting changes in some areas related to parent involvement was an expected and desirable response, and that he felt he needed to provide at least a few positive responses.

Changes in Teacher Attitudes to Parent Involvement

One attitudinal change which Teacher 12100 reported was in his awareness level of parents as a possible resource for improving student achievement. He says this changed "a little bit" and that he was

More conscious of parents. I'm more conscious of kids having parents. No, I have talked to a few more but I - yeah. (12100)

At another point in the interview, Teacher 12100 discussed parents as source of information regarding his students which he would like to use more often.
I'd like to learn about his interests and a parent's perspective. I'd like to learn about his behaviour. Yeah, those two basic areas.

(12100)

He reported that during the school year his level of contact with parents for this purpose had changed, "Again a little bit but not very much."

Changes in Parent Teacher Communication

In the preceding paragraph, one of the excerpts from the interview suggests that Teacher 12100 had communicated with "a few more" parents than was his usual practice. This may be a reflection of an attitudinal shift he reports having in the area of making parents feel that their involvement is welcomed. He believes he could be letting parents know more clearly

that I would appreciate them feeling they would have every opportunity to come and visit. Telling the children in the class to pass that message on periodically throughout the year, and notes home and the telephone. (12100)

Again, he minimizes the degree of the change, describing it as

A little bit. A little bit. It's an area I need to work on. (12100)

Teacher 13100

Teacher 13100 reported no changes in any area related to parent involvement.
Teacher 14100

Teacher 14100 reported a major change in her method of communicating with parents as a result of the intervention. She also described positive changes in the level of parent support and home involvement which she believed were directly attributable to this change in communication strategy.

Changes in Parent Teacher Communication and Practices of Parent Involvement: Home

Following the in-service session on parent involvement, Teacher 14100 implemented a communication folder which, on a weekly basis, was taken home by the students for parents to look at and then returned to the teacher. This folder went home on the same day each week and contained an information newsletter for parents covering a range of items determined by what was occurring in the class that week, or by what the teacher believed parents needed to be aware of at that particular time. It informed parents regarding what the students were covering in the different subject areas, and notified them of upcoming units of study. It outlined expectations regarding assignment completion, and encouraged parents to review with their child the assignments s/he was working on or had completed. Parents were alerted regarding future testing dates, and encouraged to help their child prepare for the tests. As Teacher 14100 described the folders, they include a little newsletter that explains what is going on, you know, what we have done in different subject areas or if we are going to start a new unit on something then we outline it. For example, my unit on Ancient Greece was a job card study and there was a whole
list of consequences and rewards based on how many job cards you completed within a certain time period. And I could outline that all right at the start. And then throughout the weeks we worked on it and I encouraged the parents to have a look at the work that their child was doing. In the newsletters we indicate there will be a test in Socials Studies next Friday and these are the topics or this is the chapter from the book or whatever and so they are encouraged to help review with their child or whatever. (14100)

The folders were also used to directly solicit parent assistance with a particular concern, and to reinforce parents for their efforts by thanking them and sharing with them positive results. For example, Teacher 14100 described how she used the folders to reverse what she perceived to be a slide in the quality of work students were completing.

I noticed about three, four weeks ago that sort of the quality of the work was starting to really slide...like they have all run out of gas. So I just sort of indicated that that is sort of what is happening but we still have three or four weeks of work that is going to count for report cards and could they please just give some extra encouragement for their child to hang in there and get things done. And actually even within that next week I noticed a real, drastic improvement and so the next week's letter included a little note to this effect, you know, thanks a lot because I have noticed that the quality of the assignments have improved again.

The folders also assisted parents in communicating with the teacher. Parents were encouraged to use the folders to express concerns or share information.

They often write notes to say 'how exactly is my daughter doing in such and such a subject?' or whatever. And then I can get back to them.
Teacher 14100 reported that the response from parents regarding the folders was very positive, and that parents felt much better informed about their child's educational program.

I've had lots of positive feedback from the parents about feeling that they know what their children are doing and things like that whereas previously they didn't have any idea. And I think that is a direct result of the folder because by the time they get to Grade Seven if the parents ask them, you know, 'what did you do today?' 'Nothing'. And 'what is for homework?' And that is 'nothing' as well and they never take anything home. So based on that maybe they are doing nothing. But they have gained a lot of information in terms of what the kids are doing and it has been really positive.

Clearly, in Teacher 14100's opinion, the folders were instrumental in improving home-school communication links. A further effect, alluded to in passages from the interview already cited, was to increase the level of parent involvement in learning activities in the home. Teacher 14100 reported a higher number of students talking about receiving help from their parents.

I know more parents did help in terms of studying...appreciated knowing when their children had tests. Or the kids would mention 'my mom reviewed this with me' or whatever. Yeah...more kids did mention that because they were aware that this test was coming up. (14100)

Teacher 15100

Teacher 15100 teaches in the same school as Teacher 14100, and she also made a decision to implement weekly communication folders. This was the major change she made, but she does report beginning to
use video taping as a means of sharing with parents things which are happening at school. Both of the changes made by Teacher 15100 related directly to improving communication links between herself and the parents. As was the case with Teacher 14100, a much of the substance of this increased communication related to ways in which parents could assist their child in learning activities in the home.

Changes in Parent Teacher Communication and Practices of Parent Involvement: Home

**Weekly Communication Folders**

The system used by Teacher 15100 for the folders and the information newsletter was essentially similar to that described above. In both classes the folders went home on the same day of the week, Thursday.

One way Teacher 15100 used the folders which was not mentioned by her colleague was to provide assistance for individual students who were experiencing problems with some area of their school work. She would send home extra work for students in the folder, with explanations to the parents on how the work was to be completed. Using the folders made her more confident the parents would see the work and understand how they might assist their child.

I have got parents who the kids are little weaker on I’ll send worksheets home with them and normally I’ll send them home on a Thursday with the folders with instructions with them saying what to do because we’ve got tests coming up or something. I also make sure that there’s an explanation on how I want it done because I found just sending them home, the parents would sometimes be completely lost with it. (15100)
Like Teacher 14100, Teacher 15100 is convinced that the folders helped parents by making them more knowledgeable with respect to the ways in which they might help their child, and that parents used this new knowledge productively.

With the folders we found that they'd know a lot more about what's going on and, again, the form of communication - you have so much to say to them and let them know and like the charts and things in them letting them know that the work is not there, not handed in, not done. (15100).

Teacher 15100 also shares the belief that the weekly communication folders increased the amount of contact she had with parents. The folders, she suggests, helped her let them know what I'm looking for and that sort of thing and on the telephone if they have any questions because they have the option once the folders are home letting them know. And that's changed because it's nothing I've done before. (15100)

Clearly, Teacher 15100's comments communicate a perception that the folders were a worthwhile means of enhancing levels of parent teacher communication and increasing the level of productive parent involvement in learning activities in the home.

Video Taping

Using a video camera to record student presentations was another strategy implemented by Teacher 15100 to improve communication with
parents. Following the taping, Teacher 15100 comments that she then had the option of inviting parents into the school in the evening for a group viewing, or of sending the tape home to be shared with parents.

I started to use a VCR which I'm finding I use more on sort of bringing the parents in in the evening and saying, "Hey we've just done ." Like right now they've each done an individual country study and they chose. We didn't cover Japan this year. I decided to let the kids go off on their own and so I have 28 different countries presented so some of them are just fantastic and wonderful . . . the kids are getting videoed on these reports and afterwards I have an option of sending them home. The parents have an option of coming and taking a look at it and then saying, "Hey we would like this." As far as I was concerned it was the way of the kids carrying over the countries and their histories and so on and so forth because how many of them look at their socials notes afterwards? (15100)

Sharing video tapes of student presentations is one way of connecting parents more closely with the achievements of their child. Like the folders, Teacher 15100 believes this communication strategy has the potential to enhance levels of productive parent involvement.

**Teacher 16100**

One change was reported in by Teacher 16100. When the first interview took place, he had no parents helping in the classroom. In the second interview, he indicated that he was "using three mothers as computer supervisors" and also had parent volunteers assisting with arts and crafts.
**Teacher 17100**

Teacher 17100 reported no changes in any area related to parent involvement.

**Teacher 21100**

Minor changes in patterns of parent teacher communication and practices of parent involvement in instructional activities in the home are suggested in the comments of Teacher 21100.

**Changes in Parent Teacher Communication**

Teacher 21100, and many other educators for that matter, refer to positive phone calls to parents as "sunshine calls". In the interview, Teacher 21100 mentions these calls as one technique of involving parents which had been suggested to him. Unfortunately, a problem with the tape makes it impossible to distinguish exactly what was reported regarding Teacher 21100's use of "sunshine calls", but there is the definite suggestion that these calls were made to a "selected group" of parents. Positive phone calls to parents may be one of the changes implemented by this teacher as a result of the intervention.

**Practices of Parent Involvement: Home**

A second initiative to involve parents related to a novel study being done by the class. Teacher 21100 sent a newsletter to parents explaining the book the children were reading, and encouraging parents to read with their children at home. As a confirmation that parents had indeed received the newsletter, they were requested to sign it and return it to school with their child. The response to this strategy was, according to
Teacher 21100, was good. He found that when students shared the book with their parents, their understanding improved.

The student insight into that novel was great because of the discussion before coming into class . . . I had a good response. (21100)

**Teacher 22100**

Teacher 22100 reported no changes any area related to parent involvement.

**Teacher 23100**

Identification of changes in this teacher's perceptions, attitudes, and practices regarding parent involvement was not possible. The tape recording of the time two interview was either lost or copied over before a transcription had been made.

**Teacher 24100**

Teacher 24100 reported significant changes over the course of the school year in four main areas: patterns of parent teacher communication, practices of parent involvement at home, his attitudes toward parent involvement, and his perception of parent teacher relations.

**Changes in Parent Teacher Communication**

Keeping in closer contact with parents through phone conversations is one way in which Teacher 24100 changed the pattern of
parent teacher communication. He reports that he made much more of an effort to keep in contact with parents, that he tried to make more phone calls home and tried to focus on not only phoning when there is a problem but phoning to let them know how things are going just in a casual sense - "Your son or daughter is doing very well," or "I've noticed a few changes in this area," and things like that. (24100)

Though he makes a point of saying that he was not always successful in reaching parents when he made the attempt, the fact that he had done more to increase the level of phone contact with parents is restated by Teacher 24100 on several occasions throughout the interview.

Changes in Practices of Parent Involvement: Home

Directly related to the increased communication Teacher 24100 had with parents was a change in his practices of involving parents at home. He stated that in his contacts with parents he had actually been trying to get them more involved in making sure their children are getting more responsible and getting their work done. (24100)

Though he did not speculate on the degree of success achieved in this area, Teacher 24100 clearly indicated it was a change which had occurred in his practices of parent involvement.

Changes in Teacher Attitudes to Parent Involvement

In several respects, Teacher 24100's comments indicate that his attitudes toward parent involvement had changed. First, he reported that he no longer felt
quite as uptight in asking for their help because I think that part of being a parent is that they need to have that involvement. (24100)

He was, he said, "more relaxed" about approaching parents, but that the change was more profound, that it was a "change in feeling toward parents in a lot of ways." When asked by the interviewer whether he would characterize it as a good or a bad change, Teacher 24100 responded

Good change...being a single person I don't have children...a lot of respect...sure. There are always demands in that I would really like this and this and this but I mean I know that parents have a lot to do and a heavy load and so maybe some of them are concerned with their children and just because they don't fulfill my expectations or my fantasies of what they should do to help me doesn't mean that they are not concerned. So I have to realize that the parents have a pretty heavy load to tow. And I mean I respect that. Especially when I see a lot of single parents with three, four kids—that is an awful lot. (24100)

Over the course of the year, Teacher 24100 appears to have developed a greater understanding of the obstacles some parents face with respect to involving themselves with their child's education.

Another area of change in Teacher 24100's attitudes to parent involvement relates to the value he places on parent involvement at the school level.

Next year ... I'm going to really try and get more parent involvement in things like school activities. I mean it is helpful to have them doing things like making sure that their children are - helping them with their homework and things like that, but it
would be nice to see more of a presence around the school because school is part of growing up and I don’t think you should have that separation between home and school that much. The parents should be here making themselves visible—being part of what is going on at the school. So there is sort of a connection between the home and the school—this is where we learn but we also learn at home and there is a connection there. (24100)

These comments indicate a clear and positive shift in Teacher 24100's attitudes to parent involvement at the school level.

Changes in Perception of Parent Teacher Relations

The final area in which Teacher 24100 reported change was in the nature of his relations with parents. Over the course of the year, he explains, his relationship with class parents has become significantly more comfortable.

I think what I said was it's a bit more relaxed from my point of view and I think probably from the parents point of view too. Because at the beginning of the year they were strangers—none of them knew me at all—because of my being new to the profession and new to the school. And so now we have had a chance to talk and so it's a bit more relaxed and it's maybe a more trusting relationship—I hope—on their part as far as my being their son or daughter's teacher. And just a bit more relaxed...I can talk with them and I know what to expect from them...if I can expect some support and things like that.

Perhaps in the same way that changes in the area of communication with parents were connected with his efforts to increase parent involvement, so to might be the greater degree of comfort and familiarity he feels with respect to parent teacher relations.
**Teacher 25100**

Teacher 25100 reported changes in five areas related to parent involvement: communication with parents, practices of parent teacher involvement at home, parent teacher relations, school practices of parent involvement, and in her perception of parent involvement in the school.

**Changes in Parent Teacher Communication**

Calling "lots of parents" is something Teacher 25100 made an effort to do over the course of the school year. However, she expressed regrets about not making as many of the "sunshine" calls as she would have liked.

Because I have dealt with a lot of parents about the difficulties their kids have I haven't been good at doing the "Good News" calls or the "Do You Have Any Concerns?" calls. Not as good - I have to set a schedule for myself next year. (25100)

The final statement in this excerpt suggests she perceives the "sunshine" calls to be worthwhile, and would like to do more of them.

**Changes in Practices of Parent Involvement: Home**

There is a suggestion in Teacher 25100's comments that she has increased the degree to which parents were aware of their child's responsibilities and progress. She reports that

Probably the biggest way I have done it is through the homework book and keeping (the parents) more on top of the kids. (25100)

though her comments shed no light on whether or not she perceived any positive results to flow from this increased effort, or whether other strategies were used to achieve this goal.
Changes in Perception of Parent Teacher Relations

The phrase "definite warming" is used by Teacher 25100 to describe the changes she has perceived in the tone of parent teacher relations over the course of the year. She states:

During the year I have felt a definite warming. I definitely feel more comfortable with the parents than I did during our last interview. (25100)

Again, no particular reasons are expressed to explain her perception of the changed nature of the relationship.

Changes in School Practices of Parent Involvement

Teacher 25100 reports several initiatives on the part of the school administration to draw more parents into the school. There was an extra open house and a spring concert, both held with the expressed intent of getting more parents into the school. In addition, newsletters were used more frequently to solicit parent volunteers to assist in the library.

Changes in Parent Involvement: Class

Teacher 25100 makes it clear that she did not make an effort to bring parents into her class as volunteers:

I don't have very many. I never stop parents coming in and never discourage parents at the door, but as far as parent volunteers go, I haven't really tried from the beginning of the year. (25100)
Nevertheless, her perception is that there may have been a slight increase in the number of parents coming in.

Maybe a few. Usually the same parents - maybe a few more but basically the same ones repeated.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers view parent involvement in the wider school context as support for initiatives promoted by individual teachers or the school, that reinforce and expand curricular and extra-curricular learning activities and provide social opportunities for children. Teachers perceive parents providing assistance in classrooms, though these classrooms are almost entirely at the primary level. Little parent involvement in intermediate classrooms is recognized. Teachers see parents assisting the school by helping with special events and school wide programs. Parents' contribution to school governance through participation on advisory councils is also recognized; additionally, these bodies are viewed as by teachers as being important for the funds they raise to support school projects. Teachers' perception of the amount of parent involvement varies considerably from school to school, ranging from what one teacher described as an "over-abundance" to other situations where only a few parents are involved.

Teachers report that most schools make an effort to solicit parent involvement. However, few teachers could identify any clearly defined or generally known strategy for soliciting that involvement. Rather, encouraging parental involvement in most schools is perceived to be a somewhat "hit and miss" affair. Teachers view regular newsletters and special notices to be the primary means of encouraging involvement and
inviting parents to participate in school activities. Other commonly reported strategies are school social events and meetings on topics of special interest to parents. Teachers also recognize direct contact by individual teachers as an important method of involving parents.

Teachers believe that parents are capable of helping, and that they should be more involved in the educational program of their child. They suggest that increased support in the home setting, particularly in supervising and assisting with homework and providing encouragement, would be beneficial. Most, though not all, teachers indicate that parents are always welcome in their classrooms, and that they would appreciate increased levels of parent involvement. The benefits which teachers see flowing from greater parent involvement relate to the positive attitudes parents and students develop, which are manifested in increased parental support and greater student diligence. Teachers recognize, however, that potential problems are associated with increased levels of parent involvement. These include the time and effort required of teachers to plan and organize meaningful things for parents to do, the potentially disruptive effects of having parents in the class, and the belief that negative parents can adversely affect student attitudes. Teachers also suggest that parent involvement levels are not likely to increase unless that goal is explicitly put on the administrative agenda, unless programs are implemented to influence teacher attitudes and teach strategies relating to parent involvement, and unless parents are personally invited and encouraged to become involved.

The perceptions expressed by teachers indicate that the attitudes of by far the majority of parents are positive and supportive when it comes to involving themselves in their children's education. They believe that
most parents want to be involved and do feel capable of helping, though some of the content in subjects like math may be intimidating to them. In terms of direct involvement in grade six and seven classrooms, teachers perceive that parents feel, at least initially, quite reluctant to volunteer because of the "intimidating" nature of the older children. The exception to this perceived attitude relates to field trips, where teachers perceive parents as being quite willing to get involved.

Of the minority of teachers who expressed perceptions regarding the attitudes of other teachers to parent involvement, several indicated that although their colleagues were generally supportive of parent involvement they also felt a certain degree of defensiveness and reluctance resulting from a perceived potential threat from close parent scrutiny of practice. Primary teachers are perceived as having more positive attitudes toward parent involvement than intermediate teachers.

Teachers report little direct parent involvement in classrooms at the intermediate level. Some solicit no parent help whatsoever. The most common way parents participate in classroom activities is by assisting with field trips: providing transportation, supervising, and facilitating learning with small groups of children. Occasionally, parents work in the classroom, helping teachers instruct and supervise. Parents work with small groups under teacher direction, or instruct the whole class in an area in which they have more expertise than the teacher. They also supervise groups of students working outside the classroom in areas such as a computer lab. Teachers also report parents participating in structured classroom observations, helping with sports activities, and working as classroom aide.
Few teachers report engaging parents in active learning activities with their children in the home setting. Most commonly, they encourage parents to review work the student has already completed, or to monitor work in progress. Associated with this is the use of a homework book, a practice reported by a majority of the teachers in the sample. Some teachers report encouraging parents to support and facilitate home reading, and provide strategies to accomplish this. Others ask parents to assist in reinforcing expectations relating to studying or to the completion of assignments. In only one instance did a teacher report structuring the learning program in such a way that certain tasks required parent involvement at home.

Teachers report little parent involvement, either in the classroom or at home, and describe a range of inhibiting obstacles. First among these is the lack of time and opportunity resulting from both parents working outside the home, family responsibilities, and the student's extracurricular commitments. Time constraints also influence teachers' willingness to involve parents. Teachers perceive that the attitudes of their colleagues are a second significant barrier to parent involvement: misconstrued attitudes of professionalism, defensiveness regarding practice and curricula, and beliefs about the growing independence of intermediate-age children all work to limit parent participation. Parent attitudes, too, limit involvement. Teachers describe some parents as intimidated by schools and teachers, and others who believe their child is old enough to be responsible for his/her own education. Teachers also perceive that student attitudes of independence inhibit parental involvement. Other perceived barriers relate to teachers' lack of knowledge regarding ways to involve parents, and to many parents' sense
that they do not have a sufficient level of awareness or skill to help their children.

There is a significant dichotomy in teachers’ perception of parent teacher relations. The majority of teachers perceive parent teacher relations to be positive and supportive in tone, though they note that there always seems to be a few parents who are exceptions. Generally, these teachers characterize the positive relationships they perceive with parents as professional in nature, with the progress of the student establishing a base of mutual interest. In contrast, a minority of teachers view parent teacher relations as minimal, and frequently strained by undercurrents of tension and insecurity. Interestingly, whether teachers perceive parent teacher relations as essentially positive or negative, they believe that parents share their perceptions.

Communication between parents is prompted most often by a problem one or the other would like to resolve, and is likely to occur over the telephone. For teachers, typically mentioned reasons for initiating contact are concerns with the quality of work a student is handing in, incomplete assignments, or behaviour problems. Only occasionally do teachers contact parents to report positive achievements or provide an update on a student’s progress. Teachers indicate that when parents contact them it will likely be with questions regarding an assignment, expectations, or curriculum. Teachers’ comments reflect the view that communication with parents is important, but that they do not communicate with parents as frequently as they would like.

Interestingly, it is in the area of teacher-parent communication that the majority of changes in teacher practice occurred over the course of the school year in which this study was conducted. Half of
participating teachers changed in some way their strategy of communicating with parents. Two teachers introduced weekly communication folders and report significant changes in the patterns of parent involvement as a result. Other teachers increased the frequency of phone contact with parents, making an effort to move away from the typical "problem-oriented" call to one that focussed on positive aspects of a child's progress and achievements. Other changes in practice included using parent volunteers in the classroom, constructing assignments requiring parent involvement, and video-recording student presentations to share with parents. In one instance, school practices of parent involvement changed, with two extra evening events for parents being scheduled and increased use of the school newsletter to solicit parental assistance.

The most substantial changes in parental attitudes and involvement reported by teachers took place in the classes which implemented weekly communication folders. According to the teachers, parents in these classes became more aware and informed regarding their child's educational program and other, related, matters. Teachers perceived an increased level of home support. Parents in these classes communicated more frequently with teachers, helped their child more at home, and did a better job of reinforcing teacher expectations than they had before the folders were introduced. Other teachers also noticed changes in parent attitudes and level of support over the course of the year. Several reported a "definite warming" in parent teacher relations and an increase in parents' willingness to initiate communication. In a similar vein, another reported that the group of parents who were actively positive and supportive was getting larger.
These changes affected students as well. In the folder classes, teachers reported increases in student responsibility and in the quality of work. Another teacher noted as well that students in his class seemed to be more accountable, and attributed this to increased levels of parent-teacher communication.

Several teachers also reported changes in their own attitudes toward parents and parent involvement. They indicate being more aware of parents as a potential resource and being more willing and likely to ask parents for help. They also report feeling more comfortable in their interactions with parents.

Teachers generally have positive attitudes to parent involvement, and recognize ways in which they can use parents to facilitate student learning. Similarly, they perceive parents as being capable and willing to provide assistance. Relations between parents and teachers are perceived as positive and supportive. However, at the intermediate level, these positive attitudes and perceptions are not commonly reflected in practice. Teacher efforts to involve parents are often minimal, and as a result there is little parent involvement in the classroom or at home. However, when teachers implement communication strategies focused on increasing levels of parent awareness and involvement, positive changes can occur. Parents become more aware and supportive, and there is a corresponding improvement in levels of student accountability and work quality. Relations between parents and teachers also improve. Changes in teacher practices of parent involvement can, quite clearly, have positive results.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the qualitative analysis reported in "Chapter 4: Findings" provide answers to the research questions posed at the outset of this thesis:

1) What are the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers regarding parent involvement?

2) In matters related to parent involvement, what changes occurred in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers during the first year of the study?

The findings are significant for several reasons. First, they are consistent with the existing parent involvement research literature. This adds a further degree of credibility to the assertion that, at least in this particular field of study, the findings of researchers studying non-Canadian sample populations of teachers and parents can be applied with confidence to British Columbian teachers and parents.

The findings are also significant in that they are congruent with the conclusions drawn by other research team members involved in the Co-Production of Learning Project. As such, they provide a valuable form of triangulation to validate the findings of these related investigations (Coleman and Tabin, 1992; Collinge and Coleman, 1992; Coleman, et al., 1992; Foster, 1992). The congruence of the findings not only supports the conclusions of fellow researchers, but contributes to the growing understanding of variables which mediate home-school collaboration and impact on student learning.
The findings also suggest certain relationships between teacher efficacy and parent involvement, which was the original focus of this research. These relationships, though speculative, are interesting in that they affirm certain aspects of existing research and raise questions regarding a reciprocal link between these two domains. Finally, the findings of this study are significant in that they hold practical implications for teachers, administrators, and school districts.

PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES REGARDING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Discovering that the intermediate-level teachers involved in this study initially did little to involve parents in learning activities either at home or in the classroom came as no surprise. Neither did their perception that their colleagues acted similarly, and that perceived levels of parent involvement varied significantly from school to school.

Researchers (Dauber and Epstein, 1989; Leitch and Tangri, 1988; Epstein, 1986; Henderson et al., 1986) have consistently documented low levels of parent involvement in learning activities in either the school or home setting. This is particularly true as students move beyond the primary grades. Interviews with parents in the Co-Production of Learning sample corroborate these findings. Coleman and Tabin (1992) report "very low levels of collaboration" between teachers and parents, and Collinge and Coleman's (1992) investigation of home-school collaboration resulted in similar findings.

Given the research (Lareau, 1989; Dauber and Epstein, 1989; Epstein, 1986; Becker and Epstein, 1982), neither is it surprising that teachers perceived more parent involvement occurring in the primary
grades. In her analysis of the types of parent involvement reported by parents in the Time 1 Co-Production data, Foster (1992) concluded that "Parents see declining parent involvement with age as natural" (p. 79). Coleman and Tabin (1992) report that "Parents certainly feel this difference between grade levels as well" (p. 18).

The findings regarding the type of parent involvement intermediate-level teachers perceive occurring in their schools indicate that much of it is non-instructional: driving for field trips, fund-raising, attending parent advisory council meetings, participating in special events, and so on. Parents' perceptions are congruent in this as well. Coleman and Tabin (1992) note that "Participation in the classroom at these grade levels usually means only special activities, performances, and field trips." With respect to advisory councils, teachers view parent participation in these groups as useful only for the funds they raise, while parents see the activities of these councils as "irrelevant to instructional issues" (Coleman and Tabin, 1992, p. 19) and do not value them (Foster, 1992). These findings are also consistent with existing research (Lucas and Lusthaus, 1977b).

Williams and Chavkin (1989) suggest that planning, a shared understanding of goals and methods, and effective two-way communication are factors essential to efforts to increase parent involvement. Few teachers in this study were able to articulate a school strategy for soliciting parent involvement, other than one-way requests via the school newsletter. This dependence on the newsletter to communicate with parents was noted as well by Foster (1992), who reports that the communications "parents receive from the school are monotonously similar. Almost without exception parents report that
their most frequent source of information from the school is the newsletter” (p. 59).

Teachers in this study perceive that direct, personal contact with parents is an important strategy for achieving their involvement. Parents agree. Coleman and Tabin (1992) state "When teachers do indicate a concern for parent involvement by reaching out, it is very much appreciated and seen as expressing a real concern for student welfare" (p. 21). Foster (1992) concurs, indicating that "While low rating teachers don't see schools as very welcoming places, when teachers do reach out to them and initiate communication it is very much appreciated" (p. 58).

The nature of parent-teacher contact is certainly worth noting, given teachers’ and parents’ shared perceptions in this area. Teachers report that most of their infrequent personal contacts with parents occur over the phone, are problem-oriented, and result from negative situations. Typically, teacher-parent communication focusses on concerns related to student behaviour, work habits, or academic achievement. This finding is expected, considering previously reported research (Lucas and Lusthaus, 1977a). Foster (1992) concludes that "All parents expressed the need for better communication . . . Parents see phone calls from teachers as usually negative" (p. 77). Coleman and Tabin (1992) report that parents "are concerned there is not enough face to face contact between teachers and parents" (p. 13), and that they "complain that if they receive a phone call at all it concerns a problem" (p. 14).

Teachers’ attitudes toward parent involvement, their perceptions of parent’s attitudes toward parent involvement, and their assessment of
the state of parent-teacher relations strike a sharp contrast to the amount and type of parent involvement actually occurring in their classrooms and in their students' homes. Teachers generally express positive attitudes to parent involvement in terms of its potential benefits, and indicate a desire for more parental support in learning activities at home and in the classroom. They believe that parents should help, are able to and want to help, and that relations between parents and teachers are for the most part positive and professional.

Teachers' perceptions of parents' attitudes toward parent involvement are remarkably consistent with the views expressed by parents. Teachers perceive parents are generally willing to help their children with school related matters. Coleman and Tabin (1992) echo this point emphatically, stating "All parents believe that they can help" (p. 11). They go on to report that "Parents are keen about helping not only at home, but also in the classroom" (p. 12).

Most, though not all, teachers say they would welcome parent support in the classroom. They also expressed a desire for more support at home, particularly in terms of supervising and assisting with homework. Teachers believe that parents are capable of doing much of what they want them to do, though some might have problems with aspects of the content, particularly in subjects like mathematics. This perception was reflected in the parent interviews as well (Collinge and Coleman, 1992).

One area in which there is some discrepancy between the views expressed by teachers and parents relates to the perception of parent-teacher relations. Most teachers view them as positive and supportive, and believe that parents feel the same way. Many parents, however, find
they "cannot comment on the state of their relationship with the teacher, because they do not know him or her, as contact is so infrequent" (Coleman and Tabin, 1992, p. 13). One possible explanation for this seeming contradiction may be that teachers perceive they have relatively frequent contact with parents, and in those contacts they find the parents to be positive and supportive. It may be true that the total number of contacts with parents is significant, at least in the eyes of teachers. However, the number of contacts with one particular parent will necessarily be considerably less. Teachers may be responding to the overall number of teacher-parent interactions, while parents have framed their comments in terms of the number of direct, individual contacts they have had with their child's teacher.

Despite teachers' positive attitudes toward parent involvement and their expressed desire for more parent participation in learning activities at home and in the classroom, and despite their perception that parents want to help and are capable of helping, this kind of parent involvement is minimal. A consideration of the obstacles teachers perceive to increased parent involvement may be one way to explain the incongruity inherent in these findings.

Foremost among the obstacles identified by teachers are time constraints. Teachers perceive that parents have little time and opportunity to help their children because of other family responsibilities, student's extra-curricular commitments, and the fact that in many families both parents work outside the home. Teachers' willingness to involve parents is also limited by their perception of the extra time it would take them to plan and organize activities for parents.
Parents as well recognize time constraints as barriers to greater participation (Coleman and Tabin, 1992). However, the constraints on parents' time may not be as significant an obstacle to greater participation as teachers perceive them to be. Epstein (1986) reports findings which indicate "Over 80% of the parents said they could spend more time helping their children at home if they were shown how to do specific learning activities" (p. 280).

The other obstacle to parent involvement mentioned most frequently by teachers is the attitudes of their colleagues. They perceive defensiveness regarding curricula and practice, misconstrued attitudes of professionalism, and beliefs about the independence and responsibility of intermediate-age children influencing their willingness to include parents. The perception of teacher attitudes as obstacles to parent involvement is not reflected in the parent interviews (Coleman and Tabin, 1992; Foster, 1992; Collinge and Coleman, 1992), but the finding is not unanticipated. Leitch and Tangri (1988), for example, report teachers' "tendency to see the barriers as centred in the school rather than in the home" (p. 73).

Other perceived obstacles to involvement, from the teachers' point of view, include the intimidation and insecurity parents feel in the alien school setting, dealing with more educated teachers. Parents identify similar feelings (Coleman and Tabin, 1992; Collinge and Coleman, 1992; Foster, 1992). This has also been a consistent finding in the parent involvement literature (Lareau, 1989; Lightfoot, 1978). Additionally, teachers and parents perceive lack of parent knowledge regarding curriculum to be another obstacle influencing the degree to which some parents become involved. (Coleman and Tabin, 1992).
What is apparent in all of this is that teachers, through their attitudes and behaviour, largely control the level of parent involvement in learning activities. Certainly, the very real obstacle of time limitations needs to be recognized; it may, however, be worth restating Epstein's (1986) finding that the vast majority of parents are willing to do more to help their children if they have some guidance from the teacher. There is little question that parents' feelings of intimidation in their relationship with the teacher and their uncertainties regarding curriculum can be allayed through timely and appropriate direct personal communication initiated by the teacher. Further, parents' knowledge regarding what to do to help their child to a large extent depends on teacher direction. Quite simply, parents are both willing and able to help far more than they do. It is up to teachers to allow that involvement. Teachers need to establish positive relationships with parents, show them how they can help, and let them know that their help is both needed and valued.

Coleman and Tabin (1992) reach a similar conclusion. Their analysis of parent interviews leads them to suggest that collaborative teacher-parent relationships are not likely to occur unless teachers both "permit" and "stimulate" them. Specifically, in their opinion, teachers must

(1) realize that parent efficacy with respect to instructional involvement (collaboration) is dependent upon teacher invitation;
(2) legitimize collaboration through an assertion to parents of their rights and responsibilities with respect to collaboration; (3) facilitate collaboration by arranging for parent/teacher conversations of various kinds, and by providing parents with the knowledge of curriculum and methodology they need; (4) encourage
collaboration by providing activities which parents and their children can do together; that is, accepting the role of instructional mediator between parents and children; and (5) acknowledge the results of collaboration by providing accurate and timely information about student performance. (p. 25)

What the parents involved in the Co-Production of Learning Project want from teachers is clear. Further, there is every reason to assume their desires are generalizable to most, if not all, parents of intermediate-age children. They want written information about curriculum, they want to know about their child's academic weaknesses, they want to know what they can do to help, and they want to have open and effective two-way home-school communication (Coleman and Tabin, 1992; Collinge and Coleman, 1992).

**CHANGES IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES**

The findings pertaining to the second research question, that is, In matters related to parent involvement, what changes occurred in the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of participating teachers during the first year of the study?

provide some indication of what can happen when teachers give parents what they want. When teachers change their practices of parent involvement by implementing strategies to improve communication, by actively soliciting parent collaboration, and by providing parents with concrete things they can do to help their children, positive outcomes are the result. In addition to the obvious benefits of increased student diligence and achievement, the findings of this study suggest that
increasing parent involvement influences teachers as well, developing confidence in their instructional practice and enhancing their sense of efficacy.

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the classrooms where weekly communication folders were implemented. Going home on the same day each week, these folders contained information newsletters on curriculum and specific learning activities. They outlined expectations regarding assignment completion, and identified specific ways in which parents might assist their child. The folders announced upcoming units of study, and alerted parents to future testing dates while encouraging them to help their child prepare for these tests. The folders reinforced parents for their efforts by thanking them and sharing with them positive results, and they solicited parent feedback and comments. In sum, they legitimized, encouraged, and facilitated parent participation, and acknowledged the positive outcomes which resulted from parents' efforts: all the things Coleman and Tabin (1992) suggest that teachers must do to establish a collaborative home-school partnership.

From the teachers' perspective these folders were clearly successful, improving communication, gaining valuable home support for teacher efforts, and positively impacting student attitudes and behaviour. As the teachers talk about this particular change in their instructional practice, their comments communicate a sense of satisfaction and confidence directly related to what they perceive to be the success of the folders. There is no doubt they feel these new strategies have made them more effective teachers. They feel empowered by their ability to involve parents more directly in collaborative efforts to increase student achievement.
Further, their plans to maintain and even extend this level of parental involvement with their next class of students are explicit. Teacher 14100, for instance, talks in detail about how she will use the folders "right from the beginning of the year", and about how she plans to expand their use to involve parents more comprehensively in their child's educational program. For these teachers, increasing the level of parent involvement in instruction is a strategy they no doubt believe will make them more effective in promoting student learning. Their comments communicate their sense that involving parents more fully has made them even better teachers.

Other teachers who changed their practice to increase levels of parent involvement communicate a similar sense of empowerment. Teacher 24100 used increased telephone contact to improve the level of parent-teacher communication, and perceived a number of positive outcomes resulting from better communication with parents. Based on this positive experience, he says that next year he is "going to really try and get more parent involvement." Similarly, Teacher 11100 changed his practice by starting a "telephone log", calling parents on a regular basis to discuss their child's progress and answer any questions they might have had. He attributes positive changes he observed in student behaviour and attitudes over the course of the year to the improved communication between home and school. His perception of the role parent's can play in their child's education has changed, and he sees the strategies he used for involving parents as another tool at his disposal to further student achievement.

Reading the responses of those individuals who changed their practice to increase home school collaboration leaves the distinct
impression that they perceive themselves as more effective teachers. A logical conclusion is that the positive outcomes resulting from these teachers' efforts to involve parents in meaningful ways has given them an enhanced sense of efficacy. Considering Rosenholtz's (1989) findings that parent involvement in student's learning contributes directly to teacher certainty (efficacy), this should not be surprising.

In different ways, what these teachers have done is find ways to overcome the barriers to increased parent involvement. Research (Epstein, 1986) indicates that the vast majority of parents are willing to be more involved in their child's educational program, but that a lack of awareness regarding what to do or how to do it, combined with uncertainty regarding the role teachers expect them to play, prevents many from helping. To a large degree, this uncertainty and lack of awareness results from the infrequent and superficial communication which characterizes relations between parents and teachers. By instituting practical strategies (telephone logs, weekly folders) to communicate with and involve parents, the teachers who changed their practice were able to overcome these obstacles. In doing so, they were able to provide parents with the opportunity to play a meaningful role.

What they also did, though, was create conditions which in several ways were likely to decrease their own sense of uncertainty about their efficacy as teachers. Lortie (1975) talks about the "endemic uncertainty" teachers experience as a major threat to their sense of efficacy. By establishing more open and frequent communication with parents, these teachers in all likelihood reduced the distance, suspicion, and potential for mistrust and misunderstanding between home and school. One theme which is repeated consistently in the comments of those teachers
who increased levels of home-school communication is the improvement in parent-teacher relations. As teachers perceive parents as more positive and supportive, they are likely to be more confident in their efforts. Second, by establishing shared goals and successfully working with parents toward common objectives, these teachers may well feel greater confidence in their ability to bring about student learning. In short, it is reasonable to suggest that the benefits of increased parent involvement affected not only the students but the teachers as well, in terms of enhancing their sense of efficacy.

In contrast, the teachers in the sample who made no changes in their practices of parent involvement do not reflect the same sense of movement and growth as those who did do things differently. They do not talk about how the situation in their class is different than it was in the first month of the school year, nor do they discuss aspects of their practice they are planning to change in the next school year. With respect to parent involvement, at least, one gets the sense that the current state of affairs in their teaching is one they have little desire to change.

Although the methodological problems outlined in the first chapter precluded a comparison of high and low efficacy teachers with respect to attitudes, perceptions, and practices of parent involvement, the qualitative results are certainly suggestive. Research by Berman et al. (1977) and Smylie (1988) suggests that teacher efficacy is one of the most reliable predictors of change; that is, those teachers higher in sense of efficacy will be more likely to change practice than those with a lower sense of efficacy. It is interesting to speculate that, in this sample, the teachers who changed their practice were likely to be those whose sense
of efficacy was higher than that of their non-change colleagues. The qualitative results certainly suggest that those who did change their parent involvement practices ended the school year with a higher sense of efficacy than at the beginning. Their comments reflect the extent to which they believe the strategies they had developed for increasing levels of parent involvement allowed them to be more effective with their students. Could it be that the low-efficacy teachers didn't change and stayed low, while the high-efficacy teachers changed and as a result their sense of efficacy became even higher?

Increasing efforts to involve parents more fully in their child's education may be important for another reason. Noddings (1988) argues that today's society demands a new form of moral education, and that educators need to adopt an "ethic of caring" as part of their moral orientation and their relationships with students. By extension, this holds as well in their relationships with the students' parents. From the perspective of an ethic of caring, "modelling" and "dialogue" are two essential teacher activities. Teachers need to model "not only admirable patterns of intellectual activity but also desirable ways of interacting with people" (Noddings, 1988, p. 223). Further, Noddings argues that achieving understanding and "the means to problem solution" will result from a relationship that is "mutual and marked by appropriate signs of reciprocity" (p. 223). The different patterns of interaction between parents and children, teachers and parents, and, ultimately, students and teachers, which improved communication between home and school is likely to promote, may in some small ways enhance the development of this ethic of caring.
LIMITATIONS

Any consideration of the significance of the findings of this study needs to be tempered with an awareness of its limitations. First among these is the relatively small sample size. The teacher data is the result of interviews with twelve male and female teachers of varied backgrounds and experience. Nevertheless, given the small sample size, their perceptions, attitudes and practices may not be entirely representative. Despite the fact that this study’s findings were consistent with research findings from other jurisdictions, an analysis of a larger, more representative group of B.C. teachers might produce slightly different results. In addition, the small sample size may be the reason it was not possible to identify separate groups of high and low-efficacy teachers for purposes of comparison. With a larger group of teachers, differences in efficacy levels between those at the upper and lower ends of the efficacy scale would likely have been more pronounced, and it may have been possible to answer the original research questions.

Second, though I employed several generally accepted methods to ensure the reliability of my data analysis, the fact that no other researchers were involved introduces the possibility of personal bias. Though I do not believe this to be a significant concern, an independent validation of my findings would be useful.

Third, the statements regarding the effect of the folders and telephone calls are based solely on the perceptions of the teachers who implemented these strategies, and so might also be biased. Analysis of the Time 2 parent interviews from those classes could provide valuable triangulation to validate the reliability of the teachers’ perceptions. Such
an analysis, which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, needs to occur before conclusions can be drawn with any confidence.

Finally, the limitations of the somewhat generalized interview schedules used in Time 1 and Time 2 need to be recognized. Using more specific schedules, with questions designed to more fully explore the different dimensions of each of a range of topics related to parent involvement attitudes, practices, and perceptions, it may have been possible to establish with more certainty changes occurring in these domains from Time 1 to Time 2, instead of focusing solely on explicitly reported changes by individual teachers.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Clearly, the findings of this study have several implications for other researchers involved in the Co-Production of Learning Project. One question certainly worth investigating is what are parent and student perceptions of the effect of weekly communication folders. Qualitative analysis of the Time 2 parent and student interviews should provide this information. Further to this, what perceptions do parents and students express regarding some of the other changes teachers report implementing?

More generally, the importance of relevant, timely teacher-parent communication regarding learning activities and student progress revealed by this and other studies in the Co-Production of Learning Project suggests other fertile questions for research. What communication strategies provide parents with the information and skills they say they want and need to help their child? What communication strategies are easiest for teachers to implement? Which
are most effective? These and other, related questions need to be answered to help teachers and parents develop effective, collaborative relationships to enhance student learning.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Tentative as they are, the findings of this study have some definite implications for practice. Educators wishing to increase the level of meaningful parent involvement in the schooling of intermediate-age children must

1) Establish parent involvement as a goal prominently positioned on the district and school agenda

2) Develop programs to modify those teacher and parent attitudes inhibiting parent involvement

3) Provide training for teachers and parents in specific, effective parent involvement practices

4) Encourage, monitor, and reinforce teachers' efforts to involve parents in meaningful ways

5) Acknowledge parents' efforts to support learning.

Doing these things would not only improve the quality of the schooling experience for students, parents, and teachers. It would move educators much closer to truly fulfilling the new provincial mandate of involving "parents as partners" in every child's education.
APPENDIX A: School Descriptions

Five schools in Site Alpha participated in the Co-Production of Learning Project.

School N is located in a rural community approximately thirty kilometers outside the district's main population centre. The families which make up this community are generally of three types: those who farm and raise livestock either on a full or part time basis, those who work in the local forest industry, and those who commute to earn their living in the city but have chosen a rural environment in which to live and raise their children. Most of the approximately two hundred children who attend are bussed to this school, some from a considerable distance. School N has a reputation in the district for having strong support from a fairly tightly knit community. The principal and most of the ten teachers, however, are not members of the community as such. Instead, they commute from the city.

School H, on the other hand, serves a long, narrow, solidly middle class residential community which contains what is arguably the most exclusive neighbourhood in the city. All of the three hundred fifty students served by the school are able to walk from their homes, though few go home for lunch. Among the nineteen teachers the turnover is quite low, and the school has a reputation in the district for having fewer major discipline problems than many of the other elementary schools. The school is administered by a full time principal and half time vice-principal. School H has a reputation for having a parent community that takes an active interest in the education of its children,
with many parents who are not hesitant to make their views known to the teachers or administration.

School S, the third school to participate in the research project, sits just on the edge of the district’s main population centre. Immediately to the north and west the land opens up into farms, while in the other directions land is divided into relatively large residential lots. A significant number of children can walk to school, but the majority are bussed. The student population represents a broad cross-section of socio-economic home backgrounds. Over the past few years several large projects, like the building of an adventure playground, have helped bring the school community together. The school has a generally good reputation among parents, and the community is perceived as being very supportive of the school.

Like School S, School A serves families from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. It is unique in our sample in that it is one of three elementary schools in the district which offers a French Immersion track. Students in the English track are able to walk from their homes, but a substantial number of students in the French program are from outside the school’s normal attendance area, and are driven to and from school by their parents. The school is administered by a full time principal and a half time vice-principal.

The final school to provide classrooms for the Site Alpha sample was School G, a smaller school drawing students from an attendance area characterized by sharp differences between the neighbourhoods. Though many of the children come from families in the lower socio-economic bracket, the school does draw students from some newly developed middle class neighbourhoods and from one residential
development considered to be quite exclusive. The student population has a reputation as being reasonably challenging, and teacher turnover is high.

Coleman and Tabin (1992) provide this description of the two schools in Site Beta participating in the research project.

School A opened three years ago in a newly constructed subdivision approximately 2 kilometres from the town centre. There are a number of portable classrooms on the site and already a new wing is being planned for construction in the coming year. The school serves a solidly middle class community, some of whom commute to earn their living in the city and some of whom are employed locally. Most of the 230 students who attend School A walk from their nearby homes, but some are bussed in from the rural area to the north. The school is administered by a full-time principal, with twenty teachers and has a reputation in the district for being fairly progressive. The parent population is regarded as supportive.

School B is located approximately one kilometre from the town centre, also in a residential area, and directly across the street from the district's largest high school. Apart from some pockets of relatively new construction, the neighbourhoods surrounding School B are older than those around School A. School B, itself, was built approximately thirty years ago. Except for the addition of a new gymnasium and a wing of classrooms about twenty years ago, it has undergone no other construction or renovation. School B serves families from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. All of the 350 students walk from their homes nearby, some from a cluster of apartment buildings near the town centre which the school also serves. The school is administered by a full-time principal and has 25 teachers. The student population is regarded as fairly challenging and includes a number of integrated special needs students for which the school is quite well-known in the district.
APPENDIX B: Teacher Consents - Participation and Interview

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, CANADA

Administrative Leadership Program

Faculty of Education

Peter Coleman
(604) 291-3622
AUG 31, 1990

LETTER OF CONSENT (TEACHERS)

Dear Teachers:

Your school district has given permission for a group of teachers in the district and some graduate students at Simon Fraser University to conduct a research project in your school. We are interested in the extent to which teachers and parents can work together on instructional matters, to the advantage of the children.

The project is entitled The Co-production of Learning. Previous research suggests that in schools where parents are involved in helping with instructional activities, either at home or in the school, children sometimes learn more and develop more positive attitudes to school. These attitudes often persist into junior secondary school, and sometimes help to ease the transition between kinds of schools. Often such previous research has involved workshops for parents and teachers on how they can collaborate to help children learn.

The project will last for two or three years, covering the transition from grade 6 or 7 to grade 8. During this time the students and parents in the present grade six or seven class will be asked to work collaboratively with the teacher in a variety of ways. The research group will provide some training for teachers and parents in the co-production of learning and will monitor the results of these training activities.

There are two possible levels of participation for parents and children: Full participation involves attending some training sessions held at the school, agreeing to implementing some of the recommended practices in working with the child in the home, and agreeing to a series of brief telephone interviews and responding to pencil-and-paper opinion surveys during the period of the study. Limited participation involves the parent and child responding to a pencil-and-paper opinion survey and one or two brief interviews. Parents may choose not to participate at all.

For teachers, participation involves participating in some teacher-only training sessions, which will be scheduled at the convenience of the schools involved, with the project bearing the cost of release time. One session will be joint teacher/parent, and will necessarily be held in the evening. There will be a second parent evening meeting, which teachers may choose to attend.

Teachers will also be asked to complete some pencil-and-paper surveys, and participate in several brief interviews, often by telephone.
All information provided by you during the course of the project will be held in confidence by the research group. Your responses will be coded so that your name does not appear in the data files. At no time will anyone at your school have access to the information you personally provide. All reports will use coded data only. Your anonymity is thus assured.

Should you at any time have concerns about the project, you may contact the Director of the research team, Dr. Peter Coleman, by calling collect, (604) 291-3622, or the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. You may also communicate with the Principal of the school or the Superintendent of the school district.

Ongoing progress reports will automatically be provided to you; a final report will be available upon request.

Would you kindly indicate your willingness to be involved in this project by signing the second copy of this letter and returning it to your principal.

Yours truly,

Peter Coleman,
Professor

I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE TERMS DESCRIBED. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS CONSENT MAY BE WITHDRAWN AT ANY TIME, AT MY DISCRETION.

School Name: ________________________________

Print Name : _____________________________

Signature : _____________________________

HOME Telephone No.: ______________________
CO-PRODUCTION OF LEARNING PROJECT

CONSENT FORM - TEACHER INTERVIEW

I understand that the information I provide by completing this interview will be used exclusively for the research project entitled CO-PRODUCTION OF LEARNING, about which I have received previous communications, and in which I agree to participate. The terms upon which I provide the information sought here are that the information will be given an identifying code to ensure anonymity. No-one at the school or in the district will ever be able to identify the information provided through this interview by me as an individual.

School Name: ______________________________________

Print Name: ______________________________________

Signature: ______________________________________

Telephone No.: __________________________________
APPENDIX C: Teacher Interviews - Time 1 and 2

TIME 1

CO-PRODUCTION OF LEARNING PROJECT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
CO-PRODUCTION OF LEARNING: TEACHER INTERVIEW 1
site cl pers no

INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS
A. Responses tend to be lengthier and more helpful if the respondent feels comfortable. This may require visiting them at home. School may be convenient, but perhaps not a relaxing place.
B. Try to elicit full responses - if the response seems terse, use the PROBES listed with the questions. Your questions must be short though, so only use the probes if needed.
C. If the respondent begins to repeat himself/herself, try to redirect the response by moving to a probe or to the next question.

INTRODUCTION: (TO BE READ): Our research group (teachers in the district and graduate students from Simon Fraser University) is engaged in a research project regarding the co-production of learning in children - that is the ways in which teachers and parents can work together to help children learn. We are collecting information from teachers, parents, and children about what happens and how people feel about it. Could you please answer the following questions as completely as possible WITH REFERENCE TO THIS SCHOOL YEAR. If you do not understand a question ask me to repeat it.

QUESTION 1: Does this school solicit or encourage parent involvement?
PROBES: Can you give some examples of how to do it?

QUESTION 2: As a teacher do you feel that parents should always feel welcome in your school?
PROBES: Are there ways of making them feel welcome?

QUESTION 3: Do you welcome parents in your classroom?
PROBES: Do they interrupt things? Do the children accept their presence without fussing?
QUESTION 4: Can you describe some ways in which you involve parents in instruction?

PROBES: Do you ask parents to help in the school/classroom sometimes? Do you ask parents to accompany children on field-trips? Do you call parents sometimes for information.

QUESTION 5: Could parents help in the school more than they do?

PROBES: In what ways?

QUESTION 6: Are there things which prevent parents from doing more to help their child to learn?

PROBES: What kind of help can they provide? Do they feel capable of helping?

QUESTION 7: How would you describe the relationship between parents/teachers?

Probes: What could they do to help/support that they do not now do?

QUESTION 8: Have you helped parents to learn things that make it possible for them assist their child with school work?

Probes: Could you give some examples?

QUESTION 9: Do you feel that children can take responsibility for their own education?

Probes: How? Could you give some examples?

QUESTION 10: Do children in your class have opportunities to choose what or how they will learn?

Probes: Could you give some examples?

QUESTION 11: Many teachers worry about whether they are reaching all their students. How do you feel about that?

Probes: Affect every child? Feel effective with every child?
QUESTION 12: What kinds of work do you frequently do with other teachers?
Probes: Problems of students? Classroom observing? Sharing instructional ideas?

QUESTION 13: Would you say that teachers on this staff are united in their approaches to teaching?
Probes: helping each other to improve? Treatment of students? School goals?

QUESTION 14: What is this school like as a place to teach?
Probes: Stimulating? Collegial? Supportive?

QUESTION 15: Would you say that in this school teachers got the support and resources they need to do a good job?

QUESTION 16: What words immediately come to mind when I mention the following: “the relationship between parents and teachers”?
Probes: How do you think your parents would respond to this question?

QUESTION 17: Is there anything I haven’t asked you on this topic that you would like to mention?
INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS
A. Responses tend to be lengthier and more helpful if the respondent feels comfortable. This may require visiting them at home. School may be convenient, but perhaps not a relaxing place.
B. Try to elicit full responses - if the response seems terse, use the PROBES listed with the questions. Your questions must be short though, so only use the probes if needed.
C. If the respondent begins to repeat himself/herself, try to redirect the response by moving to a probe or to the next question.

INTRODUCTION: (TO BE READ): Our research group (teachers in the district and graduate students from Simon Fraser University) is engaged in a research project regarding the co-production of learning in children - that is the ways in which teachers and parents can work together to help children learn. We are collecting information from teachers, parents, and children about what happens and how people feel about it. Could you please answer the following questions as completely as possible WITH REFERENCE TO THIS SCHOOL YEAR. If you do not understand a question ask me to repeat it.

QUESTION 1: Does this school solicit or encourage parent involvement?
PROBES: Can you give some examples of how to do it? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 2: As a teacher do you feel that parents should always feel welcome in your school?
PROBES: Are there ways of making them feel welcome? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 3: Do you welcome parents in your classroom?
PROBES: Do they interrupt things? Do the children accept their presence without fussing? Any changes during the school year?
QUESTION 4: Can you describe some ways in which you involve parents in instruction?
PROBES: Do you ask parents to help in the school/classroom sometimes? Do you ask parents to accompany children on field-trips? Do you call parents sometimes for information? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 5: Could parents help in the school more than they do?
PROBES: In what ways? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 6: Are there things which prevent parents from doing more to help their child to learn?
PROBES: What kind of help can they provide? Do they feel capable of helping? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 7: How would you describe the relationship between parents/teachers?
Probes: What could they do to help/support that they do not now do? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 8: Have you helped parents to learn things that make it possible for them assist their child with school work?
Probes: Could you give some examples? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 9: Do you feel that children can take responsibility for their own education?
Probes: How? Could you give some examples? *Any changes during the school year?*

QUESTION 10: Do children in your class have opportunities to choose what or how they will learn?
Probes: Could you give some examples? *Any changes during the school year?*
QUESTION 11: Many teachers worry about whether they are reaching all their students. How do you feel about that? Probes: Affect every child? Feel effective with every child? Any changes during the school year?


QUESTION 13: Would you say that teachers on this staff are united in their approaches to teaching? Probes: helping each other to improve? Treatment of students? School goals? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 14: What is this school like as a place to teach? Probes: Stimulating? Collegial? Supportive? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 15: Would you say that in this school teachers got the support and resources they need to do a good job? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 16: What words immediately come to mind when I mention the following: “the relationship between parents and teachers”? Probes: How do you think your parents would respond to this question? Any changes during the school year?

QUESTION 17: Is there anything I haven’t asked you on this topic that you would like to mention? Any changes during the school year?
APPENDIX D: Topic Specific Interview Codes

Only the first reference to each code is explained.

**PA - PARENT ATTITUDE**

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<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>PIS (Parent Involvement: School)</td>
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<td>//OS (Other School)</td>
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**PCSC - PARENT COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL**

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<tr>
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**PCT - PARENT COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHER**

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<td>HWB (Homework Book)</td>
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<td>NEF (Not Effective)</td>
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<td>PA (Parent Attitude)</td>
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<td>PE</td>
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<td>//DISC (Discipline)</td>
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<td>//CURR (Curriculum)</td>
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**PI - PARENT INVOLVEMENT: GENERAL**

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**PIC - PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CLASSROOM**

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**PIH - PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT HOME**

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**PIO - PARENT INVOLVEMENT OBSTACLE**

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<tr>
<td>PIO</td>
<td>//FR (Family Responsibilities)</td>
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<td>PIO</td>
<td>TE (Teacher Efficacy)</td>
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PZO PA //PE
//INTIM (Intimidated)
//TJ (Teacher's Job)
PIO SA (Student Attitude) //SRESP (Student Responsibility)
PIO TA (Teacher Attitude) //DEF (Defensive)
//SRESP //PROF (Professional)
//PE

PIS - PARENT INVOLVEMENT: SCHOOL LEVEL
PIS ADV (Advisory Council)
PIS FUNDR (Fund Raising)
PIS SOC (Social Activities)
PIS SUP (Support for School Initiatives)

SCCP - SCHOOL COMMUNICATION WITH PARENT
SCCP NEWS (Newsletter)
SCCP PIS //NEF

SPRAC - SCHOOL PRACTICE
SPRAC PIC
SPRAC PIS //IN //NI

TA - TEACHER ATTITUDES
TA HWB //PEF
TA PCT (Parent Communication with Teacher)
TA PE
TA PI //PEF
TA PIC //PEF //NEF //IN //NI //TR
TA PIH
TA PIO //TPROF (Teaching Profession)
TA PIS //TA
TA PRAC (Practice) //PIH
TA PTREL (Parent Teacher Relations)
TA SB //PTREL
TA SR (Student Reaction) //PIC
TA TCP (Teacher Communication with Parent)
//ACH
//PIH
//PEF
### TCP - TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH PARENT

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### TCS - TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENT

| TCS   | PIH |

### TE - TEACHER EFFICACY

| TE    |         |

### TEX - TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

| TEX   | PIH |

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| TP  | TE       | //PI     |
| TP  | TPROF    |          |
| TP  | TR       | //PEF    |

**PRAC - TEACHER PRACTICE**

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| PRAC | PIC      | //IN //NI  |
| PRAC | PIH      |            |
| PRAC | TCP      | //PIC //ACH //TR |
| PRAC | TR       | //ACH //PIH |

**TREAC - TEACHER REACTION**

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Table E-1. Perception of Parent Involvement: School Level.
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|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| advisory committee                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| assemblies                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| book fairs                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| coffee pot on                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| direct contact by teachers         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| family dances                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| fun nights                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| general encouragement to participate|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| guest speakers                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| meetings re: curriculum            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| newsletters: regular               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| newsletter: special event          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| notices                             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| parent response sheets             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| principal request at meetings      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| supporting teachers who solicit P1|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| volunteer sign-up sheet            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| wish list posted                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

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Table E-3 (cont.). Teacher Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement.
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