TAPESTRIES OF SUPPORT: TEACHER, PARENT, STUDENT COLLABORATION AT THE GRADE SIX/SEVEN LEVEL

by

Phyllis Mary Joan Collinge

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1973

M.A. (Education), Simon Fraser University, 1985

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Faculty

of

Education

© Phyllis Mary Joan Collinge, 1994

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

March 1994

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

APPROVAL

Name: Phyllis Mary Joan Collinge

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Title of Thesis: Tapestries of Support: Teacher, Parent, Student Collaboration at the Grade Six/Seven Level

Examining Committee:
Chair: Michael Manley-Casimir

Peter Coleman
Senior Supervisor

Jack Martin
Professor

Adam Horvath
Associate Professor

Peter Grimmett
Associate Professor
Internal/External Examiner

Joyce Epstein
Professor
Sociology
John Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland
External Examiner

Date Approved March 28, 1994

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Tapestries of Support: Teacher, Parent, Student Collaboration at the Grade Six/Seven Level

Author:

(Signature)

Phyllis Mary Joan Collinge

(Name)

(Date)

Abstract

Tapestries of Support: Teacher, Parent, Student Collaboration at the Grade Six/Seven Level

This work is part of a multi-year, multi-site study entitled The Co-production of Learning Project, which examines the communicative and instructional links between families and schools. The study reported here explores the nature of the relationships between and amongst grade six and seven students, their parents, and their teachers with the purpose of revealing teacher attitudes and behaviours associated with strong collaborative links between home and school. In doing so, it adopts an "inside out" approach to school effectiveness in which the classroom is the primary site of school improvement efforts.

Seven schools from two British Columbia school districts participated in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the fall (Time 1) and the spring (Time 2) of the 1990–91 academic year. The findings reported here draw on survey data for 162 parent-student dyads at both Time 1 and Time 2, and interview data for 12 teachers and 35 parent-student dyads at Times 1 and 2.

Guided by Caracelli and Greene's (1993) work on integrative analysis, the qualitative data were analyzed first to develop individual teacher profiles. Profiles were generated using a three-way analysis of teacher, parent, and student perceptions of teacher attitudes and behaviours. Teachers were then characterized as collaborative or non-collaborative and the characteristics of each group identified. Analysis of the quantitative data followed. The findings from each data source were then compared to assess the degree of convergence, to clarify placement of individuals within groups, and to refine our understanding of the collaborative relationship. The different data sets provide consistent findings in some areas but not all,

revealing the importance of linking different data collection and analysis strategies.

Even within this group of volunteer teachers, distinctions can be made on the basis of attitudes and behaviours with regard to students and parents, and certainly with regard to the intensity of teachers' focus on instruction both inside the classroom and in the home. What was not anticipated at the outset was the link between teacher respect for students and the extent to which teachers facilitate parent support in the home for school-related learning. These findings and their implications are discussed in the context of the effective schools literature and a general theory of school learning.

Dedication

To the memory of my Mom and Dad, Phyllis and Mac Collinge, who laid the foundation that made the journey possible.

and

To my daughter, Brighid Cassidy, and my friend, Suzanne Kyra, who, through their support and understanding, also made the journey possible.

Acknowledgements

In a little book entitled *Live and Learn and Pass It On* an 82 year old is quoted as saying: "I've learned that it is impossible to accomplish anything worthwhile without the help of other people." So it is with the completion of a thesis. Without the help and support of others, the work could be not be done. And so it is with gratitude that I acknowledge with thanks:

- my thesis advisor, Peter Coleman, who granted me my voice throughout the project (and probably heard it more than he wishes to remember during our regular research meetings as we and our colleague, Yvonne Tabin, "discussed" the whys and wherefores of our work!);
- my committee members, Jack Martin and Adam Horvath, whose generosity of spirit facilitated the meeting of deadlines;
- the teachers, students, and parents who made this work possible and who, because of the commitment to confidentiality, will remain anonymous;
- Cora Bagley Marrett (1990), who speaks of the need to "weave the varied elements within and without schools into tapestries of support" (p. 88)—thus the title of this work;
- my friend and co-collaborator on the project, Yvonne Tabin, for her assistance with managing the data, for her help with the quantitative analyses, and for her reminders to take time to watch the eagles;
- my friend and colleague, Vivian Rossner, who was there to reassure me when it was necessary to do so that "yes, Joan, we will complete our degrees!"
- Larry Wiebe, of the Centre for Educational Technology in the Faculty of Education, who so patiently helped me recapture data that I thought irretrievably lost as I learned what *wasn't* mentioned in the HyperRESEARCH instruction manual;

- to my colleague, Barb Lange, whose skill as a word processor and layout designer is surpassed only by her patience in dealing with the idiosyncrasies of graduate students nearing the end of their degrees;
- Colin Yerbury, Director for the Centre for Distance Education, for his support in providing time for research and writing.

I also wish to acknowledge friends and family members who, in a variety of ways, provided encouragement and support along the way. This includes one very dear elderly woman, "Auntie" Freda, whom I have known all my life and who is the kind of neighbour lady one would wish for every child. At 87 years she continues to draw me back to the neighbourhood of my childhood and continues to remind me, in her delightful way, that any success that I may enjoy can be attributed to the fact that as a young girl I sat upon her kitchen counter—and, in part, I think she's right!

The last words I save for my daughter, Brighid Cassidy. May I be as supportive of you in the pursuit of your dreams as you have been of me in the pursuit of mine. Thanks, kid!

Table of Contents

Approval ii
Abstract iii
Dedication v
Acknowledgments vi
List of Tables xii
Foreword xiii

Chapter One: Defining the Study 1
Introduction 1
How This Study Differs from Others 3
Voluntary Participation: A Point of Clarification 9

Chapter Two: Laying the Foundation: A Review of the Literature 10
Setting the Scene 10
Parent Involvement Defined 11
Parent Involvement Defined for the Purposes of this Study 14
The Benefits of Parent Involvement 15
The Discrepancy between the Ideal and the Real 19
Parent Involvement and the Dropout 20
Barriers to Parent Involvement 21
Organizational Barriers 23
Teacher-Centred Barriers 24
Parent Centred Barriers 26
Bridges 27
What's in a Label? The Importance of Language 27
Parents, Teachers, and Students as Co-producers of Education 30
The Target: The Classroom vs. the School 31
Parent Involvement and School Effectiveness 33

Chapter Three: Orientation to Knowledge 34
Introduction 34
Orientations to Knowledge and the Conceptualization of this Study 36
The Purpose of Educational Research 38
Orientations to Knowledge and Research Methodology 39
The Stance Taken in this Work 42
Anticipating the Criticism 43

Chapter Four: Methodology 47
Introduction 47
Sample 47
Quantitative Sample 47
Qualitative Sample 48
Teachers 49
The Students and Their Families 49
The Schools 50
Instrument Development 51
Survey Instruments 51
Pretesting the Questionnaire 53
Interview Schedules 54
Pretesting the Interview Schedules 54

Procedures 54
Accessing Sites 54
Data Collection: Questionnaires 55
Data Collection: Interviews 56
Teacher Workshops 57
Informal Follow-up Meetings 59
Parent Workshops 60
Data Analysis 61
General Comments 61
Data Analysis: Qualitative Data 62
Code Development 63
Coding Conventions 66
Depth of Coding 66
Unit of Analysis 67
Level of Inference 67
Level of Generality 68
Directional Coding 68
Parallel Coding between Referent Groups 68
Double Coding 69
Repeated Information 69
The Open Ended Category 69
Coding Procedures 69
Coding Reliability 70
Summarizing the Data 71
Report Generation 71
Developing Teacher Profiles 72
Process 72
Selection of Domains 73
Teacher Portraits and the Use of Quotations 73
Chapter Five: Qualitative Findings: Teacher Profiles Based on Teacher, Parent and Student Reports 75
Mr. Abrams: Teacher Self Report 75
Parent Perceptions 79
Student Perceptions 82
Mr. Ashdown: Teacher Self Report 85
Parent Perceptions 87
Student Perceptions 94
Ms. Avril: Teacher Self Report 97
Parent Perceptions 101
Student Perceptions 106
Ms. Billings: Teacher Self Report 109
Parent Perceptions 112
Student Perceptions 120
Mr. Brooks: Teacher Self Report 123
Parent Perceptions 127
Student Perceptions 131
Ms. Quaid: Teacher Self Report 133
Parent Perceptions 139
Student Perceptions 142

Ms. Quinton: Teacher Self Report 145
Parent Perceptions 151
Student Perceptions 157
Mr. Richards: Teacher Self Report 161
Parent Perceptions 166
Student Perceptions 171
Mr. Roy: Teacher Self Report 174
Parent Perceptions 178
Student Perceptions 183
Mr. Simpson: Teacher Self Report 184
Parent Perceptions 189
Student Perceptions 197
Mr. Vickers: Teacher Self Report 200
Parent Perceptions 204
Student Perceptions 210
Mr. Whiston: Teacher Self Report 212
Parent Perceptions 216
Student Perceptions 220

Chapter Six: Quantitative Analysis and Results 224
Introduction 224
Scale Reliabilities 224
Descriptive Statistics 225
One-way ANOVAs: Time 1 229
Questioning the Discrepancies between Data Sources 231
One-way ANOVAs: Time 2 232

Chapter Seven: Putting It in Perspective 236
Introduction 236
The Parallel Strengths of the Effective Principal and the Collaborative Teacher 237
Task-Relevant Competencies 238
Goals/Direction 238
Knowledge/Expertise 239
Accessibility 243
Ability to Manage Time 244
Consistency and Follow-through 246
Consideration-related Factors 249
Reconsidering Study Premises 252
Collaborative Teachers and School Effectiveness 253
Collaborative Teachers and a Model of School Learning 255
Teacher Change and the Collaborative/Non-Collaborative Teacher 260
Alternative Interpretations 264
Reconsiderations 265
Conceptual 265
The Classroom and the Triad as the Units of Analysis 265
Collaboration Revisited 267
Methodological 269
Sample 269
Data Collection Instruments and Analysis 270
Data Collection Procedures 271
Conclusion 272

References 274

Appendix 4.1: District and School Portraits 285
Site One: District Description 285
Site One: Description of Schools 285
Site Two: District Description 287
Site Two: Description of Schools 287

Appendix 4.2: Co-Production of Learning Project Student Survey 289

Appendix 4.3: Co-Production of Learning Project Parent Survey 294

Appendix 4.4: Co-Production of Learning Project Teacher Survey 301

Appendix 4.5: Co-Production of Learning Project Student Interview 306

Appendix 4.6: Co-Production of Learning Project Parent Interview 310

Appendix 4.7: Co-Production of Learning Project Teacher Interview 315

Appendix 4.8: Co-Production of Learning Project Letters of Consent 320

Appendix 4.9: Teacher Workshop Agenda 335

Appendix 4.10: Workshop Evaluation 336

Appendix 4.11: Parent Workshop Agenda 337

Appendix 4.12: Master Code List: Student Study 338

Appendix 4.13: Master Code List: Parent Study 342

Appendix 4.14: Master Code List: Teacher Study 346

Appendix 4.15: Sample HyperRESEARCH Report 349

Appendix 6.1: Scale Reliabilities 354

List of Tables

Table 1: Teacher-Centred Barriers 24
Table 2: Parent-Centred Barriers 26
Table 3: Sample 50
Table 4: Documentation of Category Development 65
Table 5: Student Scales: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Classroom 226
Table 6: Parent Scales: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Classroom 227
Table 7: Time 1 and Time 2 ANOVAS for Parent and Student Scales 229

Foreword

I came to this work as a consequence of participating in a graduate class with men and women who were teachers in the public school system, some of whom were administrators or aspiring to become such. At that point in the semester when discussion turned to the topic of parent involvement, I clearly remember sensing a tension in the room emanating from what I perceived to be an animosity toward parents. This event occurred shortly after sitting at a friend's kitchen table and listening to her speak of problems she was encountering as president of the parent advisory group at the school her children attended. She spoke of feeling frustrated in her attempts to gain access to the school, not in a decision-making capacity but as a parent helper and as one interested in promoting partnerships between parents and teachers. Although politely received, she felt her interest, commitment, and suggestions for facilitating parent/teacher relationships were not appreciated.

As a consequence of these experiences, I sought the opinion of a practicing teacher who at that time had fifteen years classroom experience and who enjoyed, for the most part, very positive relationships with the parents of the children in her classroom. From these discussions I learned that, in her estimation, her purposeful attempts to involve parents in a variety of ways rendered her an oddity. I learned, as well, that her willingness to work with parents at times caused her difficulty with colleagues who did not share her commitment to parent involvement. She had, she reported, been "accused" of aligning herself too closely with parents—an interesting choice of words, I thought.

The juxtaposition of these experiences generated an interest and a curiosity. Here we had two groups of people, parents and teachers, who were committed to a common goal, the education and well-being of children, and who, seemingly, were at odds with one another. Questions immediately came to mind. How typical were the scenarios described above? If not idiosyncratic, what is it about the relationship between parents

and teachers that causes each group to view the other with apprehension? And, what, if anything, could be done to remedy this situation—and to what effect?

Researching a term paper on this topic revealed that these scenarios were not at all atypical. Thus began the search for understanding. During this search I fortuitously happened upon a book by Youniss and Smollar (1985) in which the relationships between adolescents, their parents, and their peers were analyzed from a structural perspective. These authors posit that individuals have a tendency to make sense of their interactions with others by creating cognitive structures or schemata that facilitate an understanding of past interactions, guide ongoing ones, and, to some extent, determine the nature of those yet to occur.

This approach to analyzing relationships was considered appropriate for the task at hand and was thus adopted. This conceptual framework was used in conjunction with a personal value system that sees merit in drawing generalizations, but not at a cost of understanding the individual and his or her way of interacting within the world. Thus the structure of the relationships between teachers, parents, and the focus of their attention—the student—is investigated through the complementary use of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis strategies.

Chapter One: Defining the Study

Introduction

This work is part of a multi-year, multi-site study entitled The Co-production of Learning Project, which examines the communicative and instructional links between families and schools. The first purpose of the larger project is to identify the critical variables affecting collaboration between and amongst parents, teachers, and students; the second is to determine how these variables, in turn, influence student and parent rating of school as a place to learn; and the third is to develop, through a series of interventions, more collaborative relationships between parents, teachers, and students such that all see themselves as involved in a mutually respectful relationship in which each is considered a co-producer of learning. The work reported here provides a summary of the first year's activity of the larger study. More specifically, it examines the nature of the relationships between and amongst grade 6 and 7 students, their parents, and their teachers with the goal of understanding how these relationships affect and are affected by—both attitudinally and behaviourally—parent involvement.

To those familiar with the parent involvement literature, this task may seem unnecessary given the amount of research already published on this topic. That impression would be substantiated if one were to read an article in the May 1992 issue of the *Research and Development Report,* a publication of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. That article suggests that the research reported here is characteristic of the field as it existed approximately ten years ago. It notes that a review of the literature on parent involvement published a decade ago revealed three streams of enquiry: the first examined opinions and beliefs about the importance of parent involvement; the second sought to identify opinions, beliefs, and practices that served as barriers to positive relation-

ships between home and school; and the third provided information about existing practices, limited as they were at the time, that sought to overcome these barriers. In addition to identifying these three foci, the report also indicated a need to concentrate on two definitional issues: one, the nature of the appropriate relationship between teachers and parents; and two, the meaning of the term "parent involvement."

The article reports as well that since the completion of that review the question of whether parent involvement is important has been answered, and the answer is a well-established "yes." Joyce Epstein is quoted in this article as saying that research must now address a more difficult question: given that "families are important for students' success in school, how can more families—indeed, all families—be assisted to become better partners in their children's education" (p. 12)?

It is true that a good deal of evidence exists regarding the positive outcomes associated with parent involvement. It is also true that attention must be directed to determining how that knowledge can be put to use to benefit student achievement. Although the literature reveals evidence that a discrepancy exists between prevailing and desirable conditions, little of this research has been conducted in a Canadian setting. For the purposes of this study, then, and the larger study of which it is a part, it was considered necessary to determine whether the same outcomes would obtain in the Canadian context and, more specifically, within the context of British Columbia schools. This was deemed particularly important given the intervention component of the study. Because interventions are designed to effect change, ideally they are introduced as a consequence of:

- having identified a desirable set of conditions, which stands on defensible ground;
- having established an understanding of existing attitudes and patterns of behaviour; and
- having observed that a difference exists between "what is" and "what ought to be."

To satisfy these conditions, this study set out not only to determine the generalizability of previously published findings, but to extend our understanding of what that desirable set of conditions might be and how it could be brought into effect.

How This Study Differs from Others

In part, then, this work could be classified as a replication study, but only in part, because there are ways in which it differs significantly from other parent involvement research. For instance, Mich, Milojevic, and Jardine (1990, p. 4) report that a review of the parent involvement literature reveals that

> a majority of parent involvement efforts rely on a home-school dyad. Generally, a model of parent involvement emerges in which the parents' intrinsic interest in the child is the basis of some kind of intervention. In this home-school dyad focus, the target is the parent, and by influencing the parent, the child's achievement or school success is generally positively affected. That is, the route to the child is through the parent. (p. 4)

The study reported here agrees with this premise—to a point. It differs, however, from this characterization of parent involvement research in several ways.

First, unlike other studies, this work envisions the intrinsic interest in the child as residing not solely with the parent but with the teacher as well—particularly at the grade six and seven levels. Personal communication with teachers reveal that they and parents alike express concern for the well-being of children as they make the transition from elementary to secondary school.

Second, this study differs from other parent involvement research in that it focuses on the middle school years. Typically, teacher initiated attempts to involve parents are greater during the primary grades and ease

off as children move up and through the system (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Lareau, 1989; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Given that both social and academic priorities often change during early adolescence, this is hardly the time for school and family to part company. Preadolescents typically seek, and in healthy relationships with adults gain, increasing independence. Given this, parent involvement at the grade six and seven level may need to play itself out differently than in earlier years. However, it is argued here that collaborative links between home and school are as important at this stage as ever they were.

Not only does parent involvement drop off as children become older, the older child, here defined as the middle school student, has been "largely ignored in the recent surge of educational reform" (*Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development,* 1989, p. 13). Given that parent involvement can be viewed as one aspect of reform or school improvement, the decision to work with pre-adolescent children, their families, and teachers is an important one in that it addresses an existing gap in the literature.

Apart from the paucity of research reflecting a middle school year focus, Finn's (1989) research on dropouts contributed to the decision to work with grade six and seven students and their parents and teachers. Finn argues that dropping out of school is best viewed as a developmental process that begins in elementary school. Given this, and given the belief that parent involvement increases the likelihood of students bonding with the school and its values (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Coleman, 1987; Epstein, 1987), it is considered important to do what can be done to promote an attachment to school before students leave the relatively well-monitored environment of the elementary school and proceed to the more academically and socially challenging high school. It should be noted, however, that while this study recognizes the dropout problem and while it is believed that parent involvement can ameliorate the situation to some degree, the study does not focus specifically on students at risk. It does, however, focus on attitudes and practices that affect the dropout decision.

Third, unlike many other studies, this study does not adopt the asymmetrical orientation typical of many parent involvement activities reported in the literature. Parent involvement is not seen solely from the vantage point of the professional—where the professional speaks and the parent (and the student) listens. This study is premised on the belief that communication and mutual respect amongst all members of the triadic relationship (parent, student, and teacher) are the foundation upon which positive relationships are established. Here parents, teachers, and students are all seen to have skills, knowledge, experience, and expertise from which each can benefit.

Fourth, with few exceptions (e.g., Epstein, 1982) the student voice is seldom heard in parent involvement research or in the school effectiveness literature. Sarason (1990, p. 13) notes that:

> we often act as though students are the products of school, when, in fact, kids must be the workers in order to learn. They must want to come to school, and they must be willing to work, even when no one is hanging over them. If we can't achieve this, no kind of school reform, however ambitious, will improve student learning and public education. So it's hard to explain why we don't routinely ask kids . . . about how to improve schools.

Weinstein (1993, p. 197–198) concurs. She comments:

> It is surprising that in our research efforts to understand student motivation and in our policy initiatives to reform schooling, children's views of their school experiences are virtually absent from the debate. We reflect a variety of perspectives—that of researcher, theorist, teacher, administrator, parent, and government—yet the voice of the primary consumer of education remains silent.

This study addresses that void. Student perceptions are critical to this work given that the intent of the study is to understand relationships between and amongst teachers, students, and parents. Student perceptions

are particularly important given the focus on collaboration and the emphasis placed on students, teachers, and parents regarding themselves as co-producers of education.

Fifth, this study focuses specifically on parent involvement in learning related activities and on how schools can promote this kind of practice in the home. Henderson et al. (1986) speak of the need to extend parent participation "beyond the bake sale," those traditional ways that schools typically utilize parent volunteers. Yet as recently as 1992 Davies, Burch, and Johnson (Research and Development Report, February 1992) are reported to have found that "partnership strategies, although plentiful, are not usually closely linked to changes in curriculum or teaching—the areas in which change is most likely to directly influence student learning and achievement" (p. 3).

This study responds to that concern and in doing so attends to teacher and parental attitudes and practices that foster student commitment to learning, not only at school but in the home as well. In this regard it draws on the notion of the "curriculum of the home." This curriculum does not consist of subject matter, but of patterns of habit formation and attitude development that prepare a child for academic learning and sustain the child through years of schooling" (Redding, 1992, p. 1). The curriculum of the home

> predicts academic learning twice as well as the socioeconomic status of families. This curriculum includes informed parent/child conversations about everyday events, encouragement and discussion of leisure reading, monitoring and joint analysis of televiewing, deferral of immediate gratifications to accomplish long-term goals, expressions of affection and interest in children's academic and personal growth . . ." (Walberg, 1984, p. 400)

While the school cannot influence all aspects of the curriculum of the home, it is argued here that some aspects do lend themselves to school input. Teachers can, for instance, provide parents with information regard-

ing classroom learning activities, thereby increasing the opportunity for parents to discuss school-related activities in the home.

Sixth, there are both conceptual and methodological differences between this study and many of those reported in the literature. Here the unit of analysis is not limited to the parent/child or teacher/parent dyad common to many studies. In this study the unit of analysis includes the triad, consisting of teacher, parent, and student. The triad is assumed to be systemic in nature. What occurs at one point in the triad is very likely to affect what occurs elsewhere.

Seventh, this work is intended to be transformative. The notion of transformative research comes from Bronfenbrenner (1979), who defined it as "the systematic alteration and restructuring of existing ecological systems in ways that challenge the forms of social organization, belief systems, and lifestyles prevailing in a particular culture or subculture" (p. 41). In this instance the culture is that of the schools and involves the relationship they have not only with the students, but with families as well. This study attempts to be transformative through workshops designed to promote partnerships between and among the three groups of study participants.

Eighth, this study, unlike many others, does not approach parent involvement from a compensatory perspective. Nor does it see its purpose as ameliorating the effect of deficiencies in the form of socio-economic and/or educationally disadvantaged family backgrounds. Rather this work presupposes a reasonably healthy family environment. Therefore, the generalizability of findings reported here to children from truly impoverished circumstances is uncertain.

Ninth, unlike many studies, the larger study of which this is a part attempts to record change in teacher attitudes and behaviours. To that end, in each year of the study data are collected at two points during the year. Comparing Time 1 and Time 2 data in this report is the first step in what is to be a continuing part of the larger project: monitoring behavioural and

attitudinal shifts, if any, in the relationships teachers establish between and amongst parents and students.

Tenth, much of the research on parent involvement is largely atheoretical. Interestingly, such is the case with parent involvement activities at the classroom level as well. Jowett and Baginsky (1991) recently reported that "much of the work undertaken with parents has not emerged from a well-defined and considered strategy underpinned by an explicit philosophy" (p. 143). This work attempts to address this limitation by creating a conceptual model of the characteristics of the collaborative relationship between and amongst students, teachers, and parents.

Eleventh, the conceptual model just discussed places this study in the context of the effective schools research. Interestingly, the school improvement literature often overlooks the family, failing to see it and the curriculum of the home as a potentially rich and cost effective resource. The work reported here addresses that shortcoming to some extent. It differs, however, from many school improvement studies in its choice of outcome measure. Student achievement is typically the variable of choice. Here, however, the successful school is more broadly defined. This study attempts to arrive at a measure of parent and student satisfaction with the classroom and, by extension, the school as a place for children to learn.

Satisfaction is considered a broad indicator of the extent to which pupils and parents perceive the classroom and the school to be meeting broadly defined student needs and interests. From this perspective, satisfaction determines, at least in part, the desirability of perspective, satisfaction determines, at least in part, the desirability of actively engaging in the life and work of the school. It seems reasonable to argue that a student who rates the classroom and the school as desirable is more likely to choose to stay in school and, therefore, more likely to achieve his or her academic potential. There are, undoubtedly, many factors influencing how parents and students rate classrooms and schools. This study is limited to investigating those associated with student, parent, and teacher relationships.

Voluntary Participation: A Point of Clarification

It is important to note that this research is constrained by a university ethics committee stipulation that participants not only be fully informed of the nature of the study, but that the research proceed only with those who have expressed in writing their willingness to participate. The sample, therefore, is biased in an important way, and any attempt to generalize the findings reported here must bear this in mind.

Chapter Two
A Review of the Literature

Setting the Scene

In recent years there has been much publicized concern for the quality of education students receive as they proceed through the public school system. The media has been quick to pick up on declining scores on student achievement tests and reports of high school graduates who can neither read nor write particularly well. There are reports, too, of student dropout rates of thirty percent that have many Canadian parents and school officials questioning the learning opportunities provided in today's schools.

The proliferation of research on "effective schools" is an indication that researchers have taken these concerns seriously. Considerable literature, both descriptive and prescriptive, now exists on this topic and has been well summarized by Cohen (1983), Purkey and Smith (1983) and, more recently, Chrispeels (1992). Much of this literature suggests that the "effective school" is simply one that successfully increases student performance on standardized tests. It will not be disputed that student performance is a desirable goal. What needs to be questioned, however, is the wisdom of defining school effectiveness in such narrow terms.

To be sure, it seems reasonable to argue that most parents are undoubtedly interested in children mastering basic skills. The school's ability to do this successfully serves as one measure of school effectiveness. Parents, however, have other concerns that need to be taken into account in evaluating how well the school is functioning. Some "persisting" concerns noted by Davies (1987) include the need to provide opportunities for parents to air grievances and/or concerns; to have parents involved in decision-making regarding school policies and practices; to provide parents with the opportunity to send their children to a school of their choosing; and the need to involve parents in their children's education. Parent involvement in

children's education is the issue dealt with here because it is this kind of parent involvement that is most likely to have a positive effect on student learning and their attitudes to school—and, by extension, school effectiveness (Fullan, 1991).

Parent Involvement Defined

The words "parent involvement" evoke many images: of bake sales and hot dog days; of mothers assisting in classrooms or car-pooling children on field trips; of parents fighting for what they consider to be the rights of particular groups of children; of mothers sitting on Parent Advisory Committees or volunteering in the school library. From a teacher or an administrator perspective, parent involvement brings to mind, and for some is limited to, images of children coming to school well-fed, appropriately clothed, and ready to learn. For others, it conveys images of open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and parent attendance at school plays and other school functions. There is nothing wrong with these images. They accurately portray the many ways in which parents and schools interact. The problem, however, is that these images too often reflect "what is" rather than "what could be" or, indeed, "what ought to be."

There have been many attempts to capture "what is" and "what could be" with regard to "parent involvement" (Davies, 1987; Fantini, 1980; Gordon, 1978; Jones, 1989). Jones (1989), for instance, has identified four levels of parent involvement:

- Level one—the "typical" or traditional type of parent involvement, exemplified by fundraising activities organized by the home-school association;
- Level two—a proactive, school-level approach to parent involvement that uses newsletters, for instance, to keep families informed of important school issues;
- Level three—involvement that permits some parents, though not all, to serve in an advisory capacity to the school administration;

- Level four—involvement that permits some parents to participate in the decision-making process. Parental input may be sought, for instance, on personnel or curricular issues.

Interestingly, this scheme fails to mention that type of parent involvement that is most directly linked to positive student attitudes toward school and academic achievement—parent involvement in student learning. Epstein's classification scheme, the one most often cited, corrects this omission. It identifies six types of family-community-school interactions (Report of the Centre on Families, Communities, and Children's Learning, 1992, May).

- Type one: school help for families—here the school helps the family meet its basic obligations to the child and, thus, to the school. These obligations include: providing for the health and safety of the child through appropriate supervision and discipline; and creating home conditions that support grade-appropriate school learning and behaviour.
- Type two: school-home communication—here the school honours its obligation to keep parents informed of school programs and student progress. This is accomplished through letters, memos, phone calls, report cards, newsletters, and conferences;
- Type three: family help for schools—at this level of involvement parent and community volunteers assist teachers, administrators, and children in the classroom and in the school at large. They also support and attend school functions such as plays and sports events;
- Type four: involvement in learning activities at home—this refers to parents helping their children with school-related learning activities in the home. These activities may be student-, parent-, or teacher-initiated. In the latter case, it involves teachers providing parents with specific information about how to assist their children with home learning activities that are co-ordinated with classroom instruction.

- Type five: involvement in governance, decision making, and advocacy—this type of involvement refers to parents and other community residents serving in advisory, decision-making, or advocacy roles on parent associations, advisory committees, and school improvement or school-site councils. It refers, as well, to parents and community activists who monitor schools, serve as advocates, or who work for school improvement;
- Type six: this refers to the joint efforts of various community organizations that are in some way responsible for children's development and success.

It is evident from these classification schemes and the various images they and the introductory paragraph present that parents and schools are capable of forming many different kinds of relationships. It is equally evident that legislators, administrators, teachers, and parents do not always agree on the desirability of each kind of activity. For instance, Chavkin and Williams (1985) report that some parents are very interested in serving as decision-makers or advocates, but teachers, principals, and superintendents are far less enthusiastic about parent involvement activities of this sort. It is not difficult to generate plausible explanations for this situation. When parents serve as decision-makers or advocates, for instance, the opportunity for controversy is real, rendering the relationship between parents and school personnel potentially difficult. It may also be that parents who become involved in these kinds of activities do so as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the status quo and are, therefore, committed to changing schools (Davies, 1981). These suppositions provide plausible, if not tested, explanations of why school personnel might resist these types of parent involvement.

Other kinds of home-school relationships, however, such as those that encourage parent involvement in learning activities in the home, are less problematic (Davies, 1987). When parents actively support classroom learning in the home, conflict is less likely. It is reasonable, therefore, to anticipate what research findings demonstrate: educators view this type of

parent involvement more favourably than they do advocacy or decision-making activities (Becker, 1981; Cutright, 1984; Moles, 1982; National Education Association, 1981).

Parent Involvement Defined for the Purposes of this Study

As noted previously, the work reported here focuses on parent engagement in learning activities in the home. Parent engagement is not limited to actual learning tasks, but includes, as well, the notion of the "curriculum of the home." The curriculum of the home refers to the "patterns of habit formation and attitude development that prepare a child for academic learning and (that sustain) the child through the years of schooling" (Redding, 1992, p. 1).

There are four reasons for focusing on this kind of involvement. One, it has been shown to yield benefits not regularly associated with other kinds of school-related parent activity (Fullan, 1982; McLaughlin, 1987). Two, although the literature reports that students benefit when parents become involved in classroom work and such involvement may even be critical for some groups of students, (Cusson & Hedges, 1978; Fantini, 1980; Gordon, 1978), many parents are simply not able to volunteer at the school or in the classroom during regular school hours. To make no effort to reach these parents is to forfeit opportunities to promote productive relationships between home and school.

Three, further to the point just made, Siu (1992) has recently questioned the importance of parent involvement in the classroom itself. When studying the Chinese-American experience in North American schools, she reached the conclusion that "parents do not have to be actively involved at the school building or participate in policy making in order to care deeply about their children's education and to do a lot to encourage and monitor their children's progress at home" (cited in Report of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, February 1992, p. 7).

It is possible that the discrepancy between Siu's findings and those reported above can be explained by noting an important difference in the families studied. Studies suggesting the importance of parent involvement in the classroom focus on children enrolled in compensatory programs for the educationally disadvantaged. In Siu's work, however, there is no mention of compensatory programming or the need for such. What may be at issue here is the curriculum of the home and whether it encourages behaviour and attitudes that are beneficial or detrimental to student success at school.

A fourth reason for focusing on parent involvement in student learning comes from the school effectiveness research. This literature reveals that effective schools share a common characteristic: they place a high priority on academic matters (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Mackenzie, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1982; Witte & Walsh, 1990). Furthermore, these schools "provide a unifying framework of values, which is often expressed in terms of explicitly defined school goals that focus staff attention and school resources on specific areas of learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986, p. 31). It is argued here that when that focus and those school resources are shared with parents, there is a greater likelihood of student success. That parents would be receptive to overtures of this sort is evident from Pugh's research (1989). She found that parents generally prefer to be involved in student learning rather than school governance activities or those that focus on the school in its entirety. Similar findings are reported by McGeeney (1969) and Tizard and Hughes (1984).

The Benefits of Parent Involvement

Educational research provides ample evidence that a parent's interest and involvement in a child's education increases the likelihood that the child will benefit both academically and attitudinally from his or her schooling experience. Characteristic of the outcomes of this research is Epstein's finding that "students whose teachers and parents used frequent parent involvement practices reported more positive attitudes toward school, more

regular homework habits, more similarity between the school and their family, more familiarity between the teacher and their parents, and more homework on weekends" (Epstein, 1982, cited in Epstein, 1987, p. 128). Given this, it is not surprising that parent involvement has also been associated with noted improvement in language skills, achievement test performance, and classroom behaviour (Becher, 1984, cited in Henderson, 1987). Interestingly, as well, is the finding that parent involvement has a positive impact on student aspirations for the future. Succinctly stated, it is "clear that parental 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 are taken into account" (Epstein, 1987, p. 120).

The benefits of positive home-school connections accrue not only to students but to teachers as well. A positive outcome of collaborative relationships, and one that has an ameliorative affect on the clash of interests discussed earlier, is that both teachers and parents develop greater understanding and respect for the role the other plays in a child's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). The importance of this outcome is reflected in Lightfoot's (1978) statement that "in order to effectively attend to children in one setting, the adult sponsors would have to be aware of life in the other, see the child's experiences as continuous, and seek an integration of education realms" (p. 204).

Teachers who actively encourage parental co-operation in learning tasks are rated by parents as having better interpersonal skills and as being more competent overall (Epstein, 1983, reported in Moles, 1987). These teachers are also perceived to be working hard to interest parents in instructional programs (Epstein, 1987). Perceptions of teachers as competent professionals reside not only with parents. Teachers themselves report an increased sense of professional efficacy (Dye, 1989), the belief that "they are effective in teaching, that the children they teach can learn, and that there is a body of professional knowledge available to them when they need assistance" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987, p. 421). Increased efficacy is an out-

come of confidence gained in their ability to "demonstrate their professional skill and gain the confidence of parents" (Dye, 1989, p. 27). As the head teacher in Dye's study remarked: the structured program of parental involvement used in that school had "extended the teachers' skills. . . . None of the teachers had talked with larger groups of parents before, and none had experience of regularly discussing curriculum matters with parents in quite such detail" (p. 28). McLaughlin (1987) and Atkin and Bastiani (1988) report that these findings maintain even amongst those teachers who were at first hesitant to pursue a more collaborative role with parents.

There is another way, too, in which teachers gain from this experience, what McLaughlin and Yee (1988) refer to as "the level of opportunity:" "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). By working co-operatively with parents, teachers not only learn more about the children they teach; they also provide themselves with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, which may or may not be related to their professional duties (Dye, 1989). Such teachers place themselves in the position of "learner" and empower those around them by granting them an opportunity to teach, an act that demonstrates respect for the skills and knowledge of the parent (and, in the best of all possible worlds, the student, too) and a willingness to establish a collaborative rapport that cuts across the boundaries that traditionally separate members of the three referent groups studied here.

It also been found that teachers who involve parents "devote more time to teaching, experiment more, and develop more student-oriented approaches" in the classroom (Becher 1984, cited in Henderson, 1987, p. 5). It is true that this may be seen as a benefit to students, as it undoubtedly is, and that it would be more correctly positioned under that heading. It is also true, however, that these activities speak of teacher commitment, professional efficacy, and by extension, career satisfaction.

Parents, too, gain when collaborative relationships are established. Teachers who actively pursue parent involvement give a clear message to

parents that they ought to help their children at home, an assumption that is not always safe to make; they provide parents with a better understanding of what is being taught in the classroom; and they provide direction on how best to assist children with school-related learning in the home so that parents are, in fact, able to assist (Epstein, 1987).

The literature reveals another important finding—one that may be crucial to efforts to decrease the achievement gap between educationally advantaged and disadvantaged students. It has been found that teachers who are committed to developing positive instructional ties between home and school are just as likely to involve parents with less formal education as those with more (Epstein, 1986). Similarly, such teachers view single parents more positively than colleagues who are less inclined to reach out to parents—regardless of the make-up or educational background of the family. Teachers who actively promote home-school partnerships report that single parents are just as receptive as those in two-parent families when asked to provide home support for classroom learning (Epstein, 1986). These findings are important not only to single parents and/or the educationally disadvantaged but to their children as well.

There are still other ways that parents benefit when teachers are favourably disposed to work collaboratively. Those who become involved in their children's learning are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward school and school personnel and, interestingly, are more likely to become involved in learning activities themselves (Becher, 1984, cited in Henderson, 1987). It seems reasonable to speculate that what serves the parent well will, in turn, serve the child well.

Finally, teachers who promote home involvement perceive parents to be more co-operative and more likely to follow through with school-initiated requests for involvement in home learning activities. Not surprisingly, then, parents find themselves better informed about what their children are studying in school and receive more information regarding ways to support student learning in the home.

The Discrepancy between the Ideal and the Real

Although positive correlations have been firmly established between parent involvement and student success, teachers and administrators often fail to develop strong links between home and school. A variety of reasons are offered to explain this situation. They have to do with teacher perceptions of professional autonomy, the availability of time, and lack of parental interest, to name a few.

Perhaps these perceptions explain why teachers seldom take the initiative to activate the potentially powerful support of the home. Generally speaking, teachers do not maintain regular contact with parents to keep them apprised of student progress; nor do they design specific activities for parents whose children would benefit from home tutoring or home learning projects—be it remedial or enrichment (Becker, 1981). Teacher-initiated contact is too often limited to scheduled parent-teacher conferences during the early part of the year and, subsequently, to "bad news" messages regarding poor conduct or academic performance (Fullan, 1982).

Whatever reasons are given to explain the lack of teacher-initiated parent involvement, they fail to convince some teachers and researchers that "what is" is good enough. These teachers and researchers argue that it is important for schools to establish positive working relationships with parents and, of course, students. The underlying belief, supported by empirical evidence—not to mention common sense—is that the interests of the student are best met when those institutions responsible for the upbringing, socialization, and education of the child work in concert (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hobbs et al., 1984). The student benefits, therefore, when family and school co-operate.

Parent Involvement and the Dropout

The failure of teachers to promote home-school partnerships becomes particularly important when examined in the context of school dropout rates. Both in British Columbia and elsewhere the rate at which students leave

the school system prior to graduation is cause for considerable concern. While there are undoubtedly many reasons for dropping out of school, the decision is seldom an ahistorical response to a particular event (Finn, 1989). Rather, it is typically the endpoint of a developmental process that began early in a student's school history. Some studies show that potential dropouts can be identified as early as the primary years (Lloyd, 1978).

Various arguments are mounted that speak to the importance of retaining students within the school system through high school completion. The commentary often speaks in terms of the costs both to the individual and to society of dropping out of school. Costs to the individual are often discussed in terms of decreased earning power and limited career opportunities. Costs to society are defined in terms of national productivity. Societal costs are discussed in terms of social welfare benefits and the strain they place on the economy. Here, of course, school dropouts are seen as more likely to be unemployed and thus in need of government support (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

While not all those who leave school prematurely suffer negative economic or social consequences (Connell et al., 1982), it is generally agreed that the changing demands of the workplace make education increasingly important and that steps must be taken to ensure that students avail themselves of the educational and credentialling opportunities schools provide (Little, 1994). Levin (1992) counters the economic "stay in school" arguments. He maintains that "despite the rhetoric of the federal government (that) 40 percent of all new jobs will require more than 16 years training . . . it is not at all clear that skill requirements in the Canadian economy are rising" (p. 347). It may well be true that existing and new positions do not necessarily require the skills associated with high school or university diplomas. Nonetheless, if companies hire only those with stipulated certifications, regardless of the skills required for a particular job, the fact remains that the credential is a necessary condition of employment.

To increase the likelihood of retaining students within the school system efforts must be made to promote opportunities for them to identify

with its values and to participate in its activities, academic and otherwise (Finn, 1989). It is argued here that one way, albeit not the only way, to increase the degree to which youngsters participate in and identify with the school's mission is through parent involvement practices (Coleman, 1993; Raddysh, 1992).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

There is no question that positive relationships between home and school can be established and that when they are, teachers, parents, and students benefit. There is also no question that both parents and teachers agree about the importance of parent involvement when it is defined as parents helping in the home with school related learning activities. Yet, as Fullan (1982) observes: "On the one hand, most *teachers* . . . say they want more contact with parents. . . . On the other hand, *parents* say they want to find out more about the curriculum, what their children are supposed to learn, and what they can do at home to help" (p. 206). What Fullan's statement reveals is that both groups are of the opinion that their respective wishes are too seldom realized. Given that, generally speaking, parents care about their children and their education; and given that, generally speaking, most teachers are committed to their professional responsibilities, it is necessary to question why this situation exists and why, as Lightfoot (1978) observes, "families and schools (although) engaged in a complementary sociocultural task . . . find themselves in great conflict with one another" (p. 20).

Fullan (1982) provides an explanation. He reports that teachers often question parental interest and commitment—an observation that is borne out from personal experiences listening to teachers talk. In some cases, this perception is well justified. It must be acknowledged that parents exist who, regardless of teacher efforts, refuse to meet with the teacher or who fail to take the initiative to approach the school when difficulties arise. It must be acknowledged, as well, that there are parents who abrogate their responsibilities to their children and who view the teacher and/or the school as solely responsible for any difficulties the child experiences. These

attitudes, however, are not common to all parents, and this study is based on the belief that, for the most part, parents care about their children and are willing and able to do well by them.

Lightfoot's (1978) work helps us understand another impediment to parent involvement that is rooted jointly in the home and the school. She speaks of parents and teachers being "worlds apart" and of both groups failing to understand the different sociocultural functions of families and schools. Whereas the teacher must attend to the well-being and best interests of the group, family concerns focus on the individual child. It seems reasonable to suggest that this difference in loyalties could be the cause of at least some parent-teacher disputes. It is important for parents and teachers alike to have an explicit understanding of the different roles that family and school play in a child's life and to recognize the complementary potential of this duality.

Just as there have been various attempts to classify kinds of parent involvement, there have also been various attempts to classify barriers to parent involvement. Fullan's (1982) is the better known, although Pugh's (1989) is of interest as well. The latter makes reference to three categories of barriers: one, characteristics of the school, both physical and organizational; two, skills and attitudes of the staff; and three, parental motivation and level of confidence.

Fullan distinguishes between phenomenological and logistical barriers, each of which encapsulates items that appear under Pugh's less abstract labels. "Phenomenological barriers relate to the lack of knowledge and understanding that administrators and parents have of each others' subjective worlds. Logistical or technical problems concern lack of time, opportunity, and know-how about what activities or forms of parent involvement would be most effective" (Fullan, 1982, p. 203). Fullan states that "phenomenological obstacles are the greatest because they are more fundamental (thus reinforcing the logistical barriers) and because they often go unrecognized" (p. 203). Elaborating on the nature of the phenomenological obstacle and the human creature as well, he wryly notes that "stereotyping

is easier and more efficient than empathizing" (p. 203). The types of barriers are discussed below.

Organizational Barriers

Davies (1987) claims that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, resistance to involving parents in anything but traditional ways is very much in evidence. He does not place blame on individuals for this situation. Instead, he hypothesizes that it may be a consequence of thinking of schools and running them as if they were organizations. Organizations, he notes, have characteristics that render them resilient to change. Those pertinent to the issues discussed here are noted below.

- One, routines and standard operating procedures are the mechanisms through which organizations co-ordinate activity. While these mechanisms may serve that function well, they limit the flexibility with which organizations can respond to new demands.
- Two, organizations attempt to avoid uncertainty and, therefore, seek stable internal and external relationships.
- Three, change to organizational procedures usually occurs incrementally. Typically, this change is in the form of an adaptation to an existing rule.
- Four, organizations generally opt for the solution that "will do" rather than the optimal alternative.

Bearing these four factors in mind, the resistance to accepting parental involvement and the commitment and extra labour it implies becomes more comprehensible. It also highlights the need to take the structure of the school organization into account when making recommendations for improvement.

Teacher-Centred Barriers

Teacher-centred barriers to parent involvement that appear in the literature and that were revealed through personal communications with

parents not associated with the study are presented in summary form in Table 1.

Table 1
Teacher-Centred Barriers

Teacher Characteristics

- Level of education: the more education, the more parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). The converse, then, is less teacher education, less parent involvement.
- Professional efficacy: the greater the sense of professional competence, the greater the willingness to involve parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987)
- Teachers are neither trained nor socialized to pursue proactively parent involvement practices (Stallworth & Williams, 1981)

Teacher Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

- lack of understanding of parents' subjective worlds (Fullan, 1982)
- clash of values between home and school (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; Lightfoot, 1978; Partington & Wragg, 1989)
- unchallenged professional assumptions about professional knowledge and authority (Welker, 1991)
- teacher perception of detrimental home-life (personal communication)
- negative biases directed toward certain kinds of families: e.g., economically and/or educationally disadvantaged; single parent families (Epstein, 1990, 1983; Lightfoot, 1981)
- general distrust of parents (Lightfoot, 1981; Vernberg & Medway, 1981)
- a questioning of professional competence as a result of working with low-achieving students (Dembo & Gibson, 1985)
- teacher perception that parents do not value or transmit the importance of education to their children (Moles, 1982)
- low expectations regarding the family's willingness and/or ability to follow-up on teacher-initiated suggestions for home-based instruction or support (Epstein, 1990; Moles, 1982)
- the belief that to involve parents is to threaten professional autonomy (Mortimer & Mortimer, 1984)
- teacher perceptions of negative parental attitudes toward teachers and schools in general (personal communication)
- teacher perception that the profession does not have a common technical culture to draw on, therefore, they are reticent to speak with authority (Lortie, 1975)
- teacher preference to view parents as a "distant assistant" (Lortie, 1975)

(continued)

Teacher Concerns

- fear of parents taking over: "give them an inch, they'll take a mile" (Mortimer & Mortimer, 1984)
- concern for the child of the overzealous parent who places unreasonable expectations on the child (personal communication)
- concern for the child from the troubled family that is unable to provide the support the child needs (personal communication)
- fear that close liaisons with parents will provide parents with opportunities to question teacher competence (Power, 1985)
- fear that parents will blame the teacher for the children's problems (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Hobbs et al., 1984; Lightfoot, 1978; Lortie, 1975; Moles, 1982; Vernberg & Medway, 1981)
- fear that parents will question the professional competence of the teacher (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Hobbs et al., 1984; Lightfoot, 1978; Lortie, 1975; Moles, 1982; Vernberg & Medway, 1981)
- concern for professional status (Sykes, 1990)

Teacher Behaviours

- incongruent school and family processes (Lightfoot, 1978)
- minimal teacher-parent communication (Powell, 1978)

Teacher Realities

- daily pressures (Fullan, 1982)
- interpersonal clashes (Partington & Wragg, 1989)
- negative previous experience with parents (personal communication)
- parent unwillingness to admit child is or has a problem (personal communication)
- time commitment necessary to establish and maintain parent involvement programs (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Moles, 1982)
- lack of reward structure to acknowledge parent involvement practices (Epstein & Becker, 1982)
- feeling overwhelmed by the problems facing some children and/or their families (Moles, 1982)
- competing demands of private and professional life (Moles, 1982)
- little pre- or in-service training that focuses on parent involvement (Becker, 1981; Fullan, 1982; McAfee, 1987; Moles, 1982)
- difficulties of dealing with culturally diverse families (Moles, 1982)
- the need to focus on the well-being of the individual, but not at the expense of the well-being of the group (Lightfoot, 1978)

Parent-Centred Barriers

Barriers that reside within the family are noted in Table 2.

Table 2
Parent-Centred Barriers

- parents often feel less competent in relation to the school curriculum as children grow older (Cyster, Clift, & Battle, 1979; Moles, 1987)
- parent perceives the teacher to be antagonistic or indifferent (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Hobbs et al., 1984; Lightfoot, 1978; Lortie, 1975; Moles, 1982)
- parent perceives self to be inferior or subordinate to the teacher (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Lightfoot, 1981; Pugh, 1989)
- parent perceives teacher to wield greater power (Baskwill, 1989)
- parent fails to understand teachers' subjective worlds (Fullan, 1982)
- parent is not privy to the language of the school (Fullan, 1982; Weatherly, 1979)
- clash of values between home and school (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; Partington & Wragg, 1989)
- interpersonal clashes between parent and teacher (Partington & Wragg, 1989)
- processes of the home not in sympathy with those of the school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Lightfoot, 1978)
- parent perceives a discrepancy between the school's words and its actions (Hoover-Dempsey, 1987)
- parent concern that differences of opinion between parent and teacher will impact negatively on child (Atkin et al., 1988)
- family health problems (Moles, 1982)
- work schedules (Moles, 1982)
- parents have other children who require attention and care (Moles, 1982)
- parents become discouraged when the school communicates only the "bad news" (Moles, 1982)
- parents do not understand the homework (Moles, 1982)
- parent perception that teacher does not care about the child (Lightfoot, 1978)
- parent distrusts the school (Lightfoot, 1978)
- the cultural background of home and school differ (Moles, 1982)
- the parent's focus on the individual child is in conflict with the teacher's focus on the group (Lightfoot, 1978)
- parent lacks confidence in his/her ability to interact effectively with the school (Lareau, 1989)
- parent perceives responsibility for educating the child to rest solely with the school (Lareau, 1989)
- parent uncertain of teacher expectations regarding the desired degree of parent involvement (personal communication)

(continued)

- negative parental attitudes toward school and/or particular teachers (personal communication)
- parent perception of their role is limited to "bake sale" activities (personal communication)
- parent perception that teacher views parents as adversaries (personal communication)
- parent perception that teacher is unwilling to accommodate individual needs of children (personal communication)
- parent unwillingness to admit that child is or has a problem (personal communication)
- parent perception that teacher is unsuitable for the profession (personal communication)
- lack of time (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Hobbs et al., 1984; Lightfoot, 1978; Lortie, 1975; Moles, 1982)
- lack of opportunities to become involved (Davies, 1987; personal communication)
- recollection of negative childhood schooling experiences (Lareau, 1989)

Bridges

Having outlined the barriers to parent involvement, it is equally important to mention the bridges, those factors that increase the likelihood of co-operation between teacher and parent. These consist of shared values about the importance of learning and schooling; an acknowledgement of the complementary roles school and family play in the child's education; and a willingness to share information regarding issues important to the child's educational development. Such bridges can be more firmly established by considering teachers and parents (regardless of socioeconomic background and family constellation) as co-producers of education. This topic is elaborated in the following section.

What's in a Label? The Importance of Language

This study is unabashedly a work based on ideals. It is value-laden as, I would argue, is all research. Yet seldom, if ever, does the literature on parent involvement go much beyond the instrumentality of good home-school relations. It speaks in terms of the benefits, or the products, to be derived when all members of the teacher-parent-student triad work collaboratively: improved student achievement; increased sense of teacher professional efficacy; and greater parent satisfaction, to name a few. All desirable

outcomes, to be sure. But there is something more fundamental at the heart of the issue, which can be understood by examining the language we use when speaking of parents, teachers, and students as co-producers of learning.

What is the nature of the relationship between teacher and parent and teacher and child implicit in this research and how should it be labeled? Should we, for instance, speak in terms of professionals and the clients they serve? Or should we conceive of the relationship as a partnership? The label we choose is important because in adopting the label, we adopt, as well, the metaphor it implies. And therein, perhaps hidden from view, lie our political and ethical values and attitudes regarding the "correct" rapport between the institution of the family and the institution of the school.

Given the continuing and much publicized efforts to have teachers viewed as professionals, it is not unusual for the relationship between parents and children, on the one hand, and teachers, on the other, to be viewed as one between client and professional. Yet, if one were to investigate the nature of the relationship that typically exists between those who are members of well-established professions (law and medicine, for instance) and those who seek their services, one soon realizes that features common to these relationships, as traditionally defined at least, simply will not do when the players are teachers, parents, and students.

As Fenstermacher (1990) points out, there are three important differences, or at least there ought to be, between teaching and the ways that law and medicine are typically practiced. In what are considered the traditional professions, knowledge is mystified and presented as accessible only to those who have been initiated into the order; there is a social distance between the professional and the one he or she serves; and there is little, if any, reciprocity of effort. Sykes (1990) argues that this will not do when we are dealing with teachers, students, and parents. He states that teachers:

> must share responsibility with parents, and this means . . . demystifying school knowledge. In other fields, social distance and

> mystification enhance the claim to expertise, and possession of the knowledge contributes to social distance. The circular relation builds professional status but is impermissible in teaching. (p. 81)

Baskwill (1989) agrees.

> By giving parents the language of the classroom, you empower them to talk about what goes on within the classroom in terms their children will respond to. You turn them from hesitant and apprehensive outsiders into confident participants fully able to keep up with the changes taking place within the school. (p. 20)

It is not suggested here that failure to share the language of the school is necessarily intentional. Intentional or not, however, the consequence remains the same. Many parents, though well-intentioned, are not empowered to act in ways that would benefit student achievement (Lareau, 1989). All this becomes increasingly important as students advance through the system because parents often feel "progressively less competent in relation to school curriculum as children grow older" (Cyster, Clift, & Battle, 1979). Yet, while teachers speak of wanting parents to demonstrate a commitment to learning, they frequently fail to give parents the information they need to act. It would seem, then, that the "language of the school" all too often remains in the realm of the professional.

It is argued here that the "correct" relationship between and amongst teachers, parents, and students is collaborative, and it can be described as a mutually respectful relationship in which each member of the triad expects and is expected to disseminate and receive information pertinent to student learning and engage in instructional activities using that information. That is to say, they are co-producers of education. The expectations, obligations, and attitudes regarding these practices reveal both the structure of the relationships and the values underlying student-teacher-parent interactions.

Parents, Teachers, and Students as Co-producers of Education

The kind of relationship that Baskwill and Sykes recommend is what Davies (1987) is describing when he speaks of parents and teachers (and, I would argue, students as well) as being co-producers of education. It is anticipated that some will find the notion of "co-producers of education" problematic, arguing that the term commodifies education and conceives of it as a thing that can be "produced." I am sympathetic to their concerns. However, I adopt Davies' term, bearing in mind this limitation, because it is a useful way of capturing the nature of the desired relationship between teachers, parents, and students. The term refers to a situation in which teachers and parents are consciously working co-operatively on instructional matters, either in the home or at the school, and are doing so on the basis of shared conceptions of student learning and development. Baskwill (1989) describes such collaboration in this way:

> What we need is a shift in thinking about the nature of the effective home-school communication, a new model of reciprocal responsibility based on a mutual understanding of what learning is . . . teachers communicating with parents on a regular basis, sharing everything they noticed about their child's growth in learning. Indeed, even more important, . . . parents doing the same with teachers, feeling it was their place—and their right—to do so. (p. 9)

The collaborative approach envisions teachers actively recruiting parental support with the intention of developing a partnership based on mutual respect, reciprocity of responsibility, and an exchange of knowledge and skills for the purpose of promoting positive attitudes to school and academic growth. The term suggests a relationship between parents and teachers (and students, too) in which each regards the other as co-operatively involved in a joint venture, the education of the child. The literature would have us believe that co-production is often interpreted by school personnel as a unidirectional enterprise in which parents are expected to reinforce the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of the school, but where parents'

concerns, not to mention students', often are not heard. While teachers speak of the need for parents to share responsibility with the school for educating children, the notion of sharing often disappears when it comes to input from parents and, even more so, from students. In this study, a more equal partnership is envisioned, thus the use of the term "co-production" and the reference to parents, teachers, and students as co-producers of education.

In this sense, the study is informed by Atkin and Bastiani (1988) and Dye (1989), who speak of a parent-centred approach to parent involvement. They stress the need for teachers to look to parents as sources of information relevant to the teacher's task. To this, I add that parents could be looked upon as sources of skill and knowledge that are of potential benefit to child and teacher alike. This study proceeds on the belief that the co-productive relationship is more likely to occur when parents and teachers focus on the best interest of the child, rather than on their own interpersonal, adult differences or similarities of opinion. In this instance, to promote the best interests of the child is to promote attitudes and behaviours that increase a student's sense of participation with the school and his/her connectedness with the values and the activities of the school. Finn (1989) reports that the greater the sense of connectedness with the school, or "bonding" as he refers to it, the greater the likelihood that students will remain in the system and realize their academic potential.

The Target: The Classroom vs. the School

One might question the wisdom of focusing on the classroom as the site for school improvement when the appropriate level of analysis is typically considered to be the school for the following reasons: one, "there is a theoretical appeal because individual and classroom education occurs within the context of, and is affected by, the larger school organization;" and two, "from an operational and policy perspective, schools are the unit that can be best evaluated and manipulated" (Witte & Walsh, 1990, p. 189). It could also be argued that the school ought to be the unit of analysis when home-school collaboration, as it is played out through parent involvement practices, is

the focus of the study. There is abundant evidence that parent involvement is most likely to flourish in those schools where administrators are convinced of its worth, promote its practice, and provide the necessary support to ensure its presence in the school (McDill et al., 1969).

However, although teachers have some liberty to act independently of principals, the latter's views regarding parents and parent involvement undoubtedly influence the extent to which parents are made to feel a part of the school community. Personal experience leads to the conclusion that some principals have a rather limited interpretation of what constitutes home-school collaboration and fail to endorse teacher-initiated opportunities for mutually co-operative working relationships. Chavkin and Williams (1987) predict that this situation is unlikely to change as long as administrators continue to adhere to the "traditional one-way practice of enlisting parents only to support existing school activities" (p. 167). Such principals maintain an arms length relationship with parents and consider the appropriate parental role to be that of the "distant assistant" (Lortie, 1975). Yet, within these schools teachers can be found who, resisting established norms, work closely with parents because they believe this is an important way to nurture student well-being—academic and otherwise.

Even in those schools where administrators support home-school collaboration, there remains the possibility of between-classroom differences in the degree to which teachers value parent involvement in student learning and initiate practices that encourage productive parent-student interaction. Such differences would be obscured if the school were the unit of analysis. As Witte and Walsh (1990) comment, "aggregation at the school level masks considerable variation within schools and makes it impossible to determine if recommended approaches would have a uniform effect on different student subgroups" (p. 190; Cohen, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Because this study focuses on the interrelationships between and amongst student, teacher, and parent, detecting these differences is important. The classroom, therefore, becomes the appropriate unit of analysis.

Support for this decision comes from Davies et al. (1992, Feb.) who report that few attempts to increase parent involvement efforts are initiated by or aimed at classroom teachers. They argue that efforts "to promote school, family, and community partnerships . . . are likely to fall short of their goal unless ways are found to involve more teachers more directly" (p. 3), teacher involvement being "one key to parent and community collaboration" (p. 3). Fullan (1991) concurs. "The individual practices of each teacher at particular grade levels and in particular subject areas are the keystone for strong programs of parent involvement" (p. 234).

None of this necessarily negates the importance of administrator leadership in this area. In the best of all possible worlds, teachers and principals would share a common and positive attitude toward parent involvement and both would extend themselves in ways that increase the likelihood of all parents—regardless of educational background and socio-economic status—becoming involved in their children's education.

Parent Involvement and School Effectiveness

Choosing the classroom and more specifically the triadic relationships within classrooms as the units of analysis is consistent with this study's inside out approach to school improvement. As Bossert comments (1988), "schools are not really the units of instruction" (p. 349). To explain, he quotes Barr and Dreeben (1983) who "liken (schools) to 'switching yards where children within a given age range and from a designated geographical area are assigned to teachers who bring them into contact with approved learning materials, specified as being appropriate to age or ability, during certain allotted periods of time'" (p. 6, cited in Bossert, 1988, p. 349). He goes on to say that "the productive technology, where materials are actually put to use, occurs in the classroom" (p. 349). What occurs at the classroom level, then, is critical to student development and renders it an appropriate site from which to study school effectiveness or to work toward school improvement. Speaking specifically of this study, it is argued that schools improve as the classroom-based triadic relationship between and amongst teacher, parent, and child becomes more collaborative.

Chapter Three: Orientation to Knowledge

Introduction

Krathwohl (1985) argues that the orientation researchers bring to their work inevitably influences not only the choice of phenomena to be examined but also the strategies used during the investigation. To bring these orientations into focus, he presents a typology that positions each orientation along a continuum, commencing with those most closely aligned with the traditions of the natural sciences and proceeding toward those more representative of humanistic enquiry. It must be noted that Krathwohl has occasionally used terms that are coincident with formal epistemological positions (for example, the pragmatist vs. pragmatism). It is important, therefore, to understand that in this context these terms have a stipulated meaning that should not be confused with a similarly labeled epistemological position.

The Pragmatist. In this context the term "pragmatist" is used to describe a researcher whose intent is to discover "what works" and for whom. Understanding "why" is not particularly important. The pragmatist studies only those constructs that lend themselves to direct observation and measurement. The rigors of the natural sciences are adhered to and the investigation is presumed to proceed in a detached, value-free manner.

The Analyzer. Like the pragmatist, the analyzer strives to establish causality and believes that this can best be accomplished by adhering to the canons of the scientific method. Causality, however, is more difficult to determine here because unlike the pragmatist, who thinks in terms of rigid, mechanical laws, the analyzer views the world as being comprised of "loosely coupled systems." Analyzers differ from pragmatists in other ways as well. They are interested in developing theoretical understanding of the phenomena they study. "Validating hypotheses is typically their main

business" (Krathwohl, 1985, p. 163), which they do through carefully designed experimental studies.

The Synthesizer. The synthesizer represents a departure from the deductive approach to research, which characterizes the work of the pragmatist and analyzer. For the synthesizer, theory is the outcome rather than the starting point of enquiry. The shift to inductive reasoning is associated with a shift in investigative purpose. Rather than focusing on prediction and control, synthesizers seek to describe and explain and do so by ascribing to a holistic rather than reductionist approach to enquiry. Although synthesizers value the scientific way of knowing, they are less likely to assume that enquiry can be truly objective and value-free.

The Theorizer. Theorizers are researchers who "have an uncanny ability to find common patterns across groups, aggregating at an appropriate level so that the random noise cancels and pattern is apparent" (Krathwohl, 1985, p. 166). Observation, existing literature, and intuition are the theorizer's tools. The task is to discern patterns and relationships that lead to conceptual understanding of the phenomena, the testing of which is often left to other investigators.

The Multiperspectivist. This is a researcher who studies a phenomenon from several perspectives and who attempts to establish explanations from each point of view. Not surprisingly, contradictory explanations are not uncommon. The task of the multiperspectivist, therefore, is to reconcile the differences that inevitably emerge by analyzing data at "a level of aggregation at which patterns are discernible" (p. 170).

The Humanist. The humanist, like the synthesizer, believes that determining causation in the social sciences is an extremely complex task. Where the two differ is in their propensity to establish generalizations. Synthesizers, while appreciating the contextual complexity of the world, nevertheless attempt to discover regularities in the data. They are also willing to generalize their findings to other settings. Humanists, on the other hand, attempt to explain the phenomenon under investigation, but

the reader is left to draw connections between the explanation offered and the individual's personal cognitive map.

The Particularist. Unlike those who adhere to a scientific mode of enquiry and who remain detached from what or who is being investigated, the particularist interacts freely with study participants. This is a researcher who believes that events and behaviours cannot be extricated from their particular circumstances, rendering explanations context-specific and generalizations impossible.

Orientations to Knowledge and the Conceptualization of this Study

Three of Krathwohl's seven orientations to knowledge influenced the conceptualization of this study: the theorizer, the synthesizer, and the analyzer. The work of the theorist comes into play to combat the largely atheoretical tenor typical of much of the research on parent involvement. This study attempts to overcome that conceptual void. The main emphasis is to "(develop) out of the observations an explanation that makes a conceptual contribution to knowledge" (Krathwohl, 1985, p. 165).

The theorizer does not work alone; she is involved in a reciprocal relationship with the synthesizer. The synthesizer's endeavours guide the theorist's efforts and the theorizer's abstractions are substantiated or refuted by further efforts of the synthesizer. Methodologically, the synthesizer is present in the use of interviews to capture the "cloudlike" rather than "clocklike" interaction between individuals and their environments (Krathwohl, 1985 credits Popper with these terms, p. 163) and in so doing: determines whether issues and variables the researcher brought to the study in the form of questionnaire items and interview schedules are salient to those participating in the project; and uncovers variables that may have been overlooked or not considered in the original conceptualization of the work.

It should be noted, that while it is true that the synthesizer seeks to understand and explain rather than predict and control, this does not necessarily preclude or render illegitimate a search for causal explanations. Fielding and Fielding (1986) explain that those who are drawn to an interpretivistic approach to enquiry, which the synthesizer certainly is, have "often dodged the issue (of causality) and (have) been less than willing to admit that causal modeling is one of its legitimate concerns" (p. 22). Miles and Huberman (1984) would agree with this statement and would argue that non-positivistic approaches to enquiry can produce "rather powerful general explanations" of relationships that are "deterministic rather than solely correlational" (p. 132).

As one works back and forth between abstractions and the phenomenon itself, it is reasonable to assume that the skills of the analyzer will come in to play at some point. Like Krathwohl's analyzer, this researcher understands the limits of mechanistic models of human interaction and is therefore sympathetic with the notion of loose coupling. It should be noted, however, that in some respects the analyzer in this study is not exactly as Krathwohl has described her. Here, hypotheses are tested, but they are not the product of deductive reasoning. In this study, the hypotheses examined are those that have emerged from the grounded theory approach to data analysis.

Given the role of the synthesizer in this work and given that the synthesizer leans toward an interpretive approach to research, to speak of "testing" in this context may be questioned. For some, such language would suggest paradigmatic confusion on the part of the researcher. For those who would criticize the use of this term, the concept of "testing" more properly belongs in the domain of the natural sciences. Strauss and Corbin (1990), however, explain that "testing is a crucially important and integral part of grounded theory. It is built into each step of the process." Here, however, it is "not testing in a statistical sense." Instead, it is testing that involves "constantly comparing hypotheses against reality (the data), making modifications, then testing again" (p. 187).

The Purpose of Educational Research

The decision to adopt various orientations to knowledge within a single study is not problematic for those who believe that "the world is as many things as there are ways to describe it" (Goodman, 1978). In the world of educational research, and particularly in that part of the world that attempts to understand interactions between and amongst teachers, parents, and students, there is more than a modicum of relevance to Goodman's statement. Furthermore, there is undoubtedly value in discovering those various worlds if the schooling experience is to be all it possibly can be for students.

However, as valuable as it may be to understand those individual worlds, which would be the intent of and sufficient for the particularist, there is a danger in subscribing too fervently to this perspective. An extreme weighting on the idiosyncratic reflects the belief that human interactions are so complex and context-dependent that regularities cannot be discerned. A consequence of this position is that generalizations cannot be drawn from the data and that lessons learned cannot be transferred from one situation to another.

This causes one to question what purpose educational research ought to serve. Is the generation or discovery of knowledge a goal sufficient unto itself? Or is it reasonable to expect that newly acquired understandings ought to serve the public good? There is, of course, no one correct answer to these questions; different problem statements command different responses. This having been said, however, one can and ought to be clear about the values driving one's own work.

The research reported here reflects Cronbach's (1975) belief that the purpose of educational research ought to be the development of "explanatory concepts, concepts that will help people use their heads" (p. 126). To this I add that research ought to develop not only explanatory concepts but explanatory relationships between concepts as well, to further allow people to "use their heads." The values influencing the conceptualization of this

work, therefore, give rise to what are considered two desirable and complementary purposes of research: one, to gain understanding of the phenomenon being investigated; and two, to inform practice.

Discerning behavioural regularities and, where possible, providing explanations for them are critical to the goal of guiding practice. To search for patterns and causal linkages, however, is not to suggest that the outcome need be rigid, mechanistic, and universal laws. This would be to position the research in direct opposition to the particularist's orientation. It would be to decontextualize individuals to the extreme and would reflect a view of human beings as creatures who respond to external forces without cognitive or affective mediation of any sort—a stance not adopted here.

To guide practice, one must believe that behavioural regularities can be discerned in the ways people interact with one another. This having been said, however, it must be realized that to guide practice *judiciously*, the patterns research studies reveal should not be applied without some consideration of individual circumstances and how they may affect the generalizability of findings. The intent of this work, then, can be summarized by quoting Fielding and Fielding (1986): "We need to be able to read the small print of social interaction but also to make out the entity into which the pages are combined" (p. 34).

Orientations to Knowledge and Research Methodology

In adopting various orientations to knowledge, this research adopts as well different research methodologies. Both quantitative and qualitative strategies are used to refine our understanding of the relationships between and amongst teachers, parents, and students. A researcher who employs both quantitative and qualitative methods within the same study is obliged to address the debate regarding the permissibility of this approach.

A problem statement can be likened to a landscape and research strategies to hillsides. The argument could then be advanced that "the landscape looks different depending on the particular hill you happen to choose to stand on" (Ball, 1985, p. 28 cited in Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 50). It could be further argued that to acquire as rich an understanding of the lay of the land as possible, spotters ought to be positioned on as many hillsides as budget and time permit. That is to say, a variety of research strategies increases the likelihood of increasing the breadth and depth of understanding. Those in sympathy with this analogy argue that our understanding of a phenomenon is enhanced when we study it from the different points of view that the different research strategies permit. If findings converge, the validity of the conclusions drawn are strengthened. If they diverge, by attempting to understand this divergence, we come closer to an approximation of the truth.

Purists, however, claim that this line of argument is simplistic. They argue that methodologies derive from particular orientations to the world and that each orientation carries with it values and assumptions. From this perspective, adherence to a particular way of viewing the world predisposes one to view the world and its events in profoundly different ways (Rist, 1977, cited in Reichardt and Cook 1979, p. 9). This, in turn, affects what one perceives to be worthy of investigation, how the investigation ought to proceed, and how knowledge claims emanating from that research are to be adjudicated. To say, then, that anything goes, as the surveyors of the landscape might propose, is to fail to appreciate the epistemological and reputedly incompatible underpinnings of the different research methodologies. There is certainly merit in the purists' reference to incompatible underpinnings. They are correct in arguing that researchers cannot position themselves in two opposing epistemological "places" at the same time. It is not possible, for instance, to be detached from yet integrally connected to that which is being observed, at least not simultaneously.

While it is true that simultaneous adoption of certain orientations to knowledge are incompatible, it is not necessarily true that complementary

use of different research strategies is not an effective way to proceed. Part of the purist-eclectic debate may be exacerbated by the language often used to discuss these issues. It is not uncommon to read commentaries on the benefits of "mixing" or "blending" methods. According to the dictionary, "to mix" is "to combine or put together in one mass or compound so as to render the constituent parts wholly or partially indistinguishable from one another;" and "to blend" is to "mingle and combine so as to obscure or harmonize the varying components." The underlying metaphors these terms imply are problematic, and it is not surprising that the purists balk at the notion of "mixing" or "blending" strategies, if these words suggest to them that epistemological differences are obscured.

However, if emphasis is placed on that part of the definition of "to blend" that refers to harmonizing, then the eclectic's approach seems not only possible but fruitful. The idea of harmony is reflected in Fielding and Fielding's (1986) work in which they refer to the practice of "linking data." They speak of the positive effects of integrating different data collection and data analysis procedures in ways that increase the likelihood of research yielding greater depth and breadth of understanding. They recommend that researchers "choose at least one method which is specifically suited to exploring the structural aspects of the problem and at least one which can capture the essential elements of its meaning to those involved" (p. 34).

The eclectic would agree with this advice and would argue that even those who sit firmly on one side of the fence or the other do, in fact, employ strategies from the "other side." As Salomon (1991) notes, qualitative researchers have been known to test a priori models and hypotheses; phenomenologically oriented social psychologists have used quantitative measures; and quantitative researchers have seen merit in including descriptive information regarding perceptions, values, and beliefs of those they have studied. Miles and Huberman (1984) agree. They state that "few logical positivists will now dispute the validity and explanatory importance of subjective data, and few phenomenologists still practice pure hermeneu-

tics—and even those believe that there are generic properties in the ways we idiosyncratically 'make' rules and common sense" (20).

To follow Fielding and Fielding's (1986) advice is to address a conundrum the methodological debate has caused for many researchers, which they articulate in a quotation they credit to Zelditch: "If you prefer 'hard' data you are for quantification and if you prefer 'real, deep' data you are for qualitative participant observation. What to do if you prefer data that are real, deep, *and* hard is not immediately apparent" (Zelditch, 1962, p. 566, quoted in Fielding and Fielding, 1986, p. 10).

The Stance Taken in this Work

There comes a point at which one must declare on which side of the fence one is positioned. Given the various orientations to knowledge adopted in this study, the work presented here represents that of the eclectic in that various strategies are used for various purposes, all of which contribute to the overall purpose of developing a better understanding of the relationships between and among teachers, parents, and students.

In summary, a variety of purposes are served by allowing qualitative and quantitative strategies to work in concert. Both assist the other in making sense of data collected at a given point in time; in refining data collection instruments for future use; and in exploring the structural aspects of relationships between and amongst parents, students, and teachers. This approach reflects Fielding and Fielding's (1986) advice to permit qualitative data to be more than the servant of quantitative techniques. The use to which interview data are put is not limited to the provision of anecdotes for the purpose of substantiating the product of statistical analyses. Rather it plays the predominant role in generating a conceptual framework that refines our understanding of home-school liaisons.

It should be pointed out that although the terms "quantitative" and "qualitative" are used to refer to different data collection and analysis

strategies, this is not meant to suggest a difference in perspective. Although one yields numerical data, which are subjected to statistical tests, and the other yields narrative data, both kinds of information are collected and analyzed within an interpretive framework. As Cole and Knowles (1993) point out, "'paradigm' and 'method' are not synonymous" (p. 491).

Given the exploratory nature of this research, the interpretive approach was deemed the most appropriate as it is more likely to capture the complexities of the student-teacher-parent relationship. As Cole and Knowles (1993) report, "'traditional' approaches to research . . . , based on assumptions reflecting an objective, logical-deductive view of knowledge and a conception of teaching as a rational set of predictable behaviors essentially devoid of person and context, increasingly are being passed over" (p. 475). The importance of the shift from positivist to interpretive approaches to educational research is substantiated by Fielding and Fielding (1986). They maintain that "grave analytic errors can be avoided by comparative work which could not be avoided by sophisticated mathematical formulations and complex models" (p. 20). Quoting Andreski (1983), they go on to say that "no amount of sophistication in model building can compensate for the error of leaving out one essential variable" (p. 7). Identifying that variable is more likely to occur here as a consequence of adopting the interpretive rather than the positivist approach to research.

Anticipating the Criticism . . .

It is acknowledged that purists such as Schwandt (1989) may be unconvinced by the position advanced here and may continue to perceive it as an issue to be discussed in terms of the qualitative-quantitative paradigm debate. He would argue that attempts at "eliminating, mitigating, or otherwise resolving the tensions that exist between quantitative and qualitative paradigms" (p. 380) are fraught with difficulties. Borrowing from and expanding upon Morgan's work (1983), he places all such "solution-types" under six headings:

- denial—proponents simply deny that a problem exists on one of three grounds: one, differences between the traditions are thematic rather than paradigmatic and therefore are more imagined than real. They are the consequence of differing emphases of attributes common to both approaches; two, the normative, quantitative approach has always contained elements of qualitative enquiry. The two traditions, therefore, are not as distinct as the current debate would have us believe; or three, the conflict is based on outmoded interpretations of the epistemological foundations of quantitative approach. Referencing Campbell (1975) and Phillips (1983), Schwandt (1989) states that "advocates of the qualitative paradigm criticize an ideal, positivistic, natural science version of the quantitative model that has long been abandoned by philosophers of both the natural and the social sciences" (p. 381).
- co-optation—proponents acknowledge the presence of assumptional or paradigmatic differences but claim that these need not be problematic. As Schwandt (1989) puts it, this approach attempts "to co-opt the qualitative approach by assimilating it into the culture of the inquiry governed by the normative model" (p. 382).
- supremacy—sees both approaches claiming to be *the* approach and assessing the other against the standards set for the paradigm of choice.
- replacement—followers "solve" the paradigmatic debate by introducing a third alternative, for instance, a feminist orientation to knowledge.
- primacy of method—the argument here is that the method selected is the one that is most likely to reveal the kind of information sought. "Any method may be used in service of any goal, and methods-choice is determined by a variety of factors that can easily be seen to be (and will likely remain) paradigm independent" (Schwandt, 1989, p. 389). Adherents to this approach argue that there are practical issues awaiting solution and that it is incumbent upon researchers to use whatever methods are available to them.

- anarchism—succinctly stated, the stance here is that "anything goes." Undoubtedly, adherents do not intend this position to be taken to the extreme that Schwandt envisions when he suggests that "horoscopes in daily newspapers might well be considered as reliable and valid as any other means of understanding human behavior" (p. 393).

If this study were to be accused of any of the foregoing methodological wrongdoings, it would be that of opting for primacy of method—as Schwandt defines it. He comments that "any method can be used in the service of any goal" (p. 389). The goal, the phenomenon to be studied, is defined first. Then, decisions regarding data collection and analysis strategies are determined based on their ability to provide the kind of information sought. The term "primacy of method," then, refers to a methodological pragmatism that is used to service, not determine, the phenomenon to be studied.

This stance is taken because there *are* practical problems to be resolved. The social cost of failing to resolve them, or at least failing to work toward a resolution, can be high. To forfeit opportunities to address these issues, such as finding ways to encourage students to stay in school, pending the resolution of the paradigm debate, is, from the perspective of this researcher, irresponsible. This is especially true if, as Rizo (1991) predicts, the confrontation will continue well into the next century.

It is argued here that both the immediate and long term goals of this study are sufficiently worthy as to render Schwandt's criticisms, while epistemologically interesting, insufficiently threatening to curtail the work at hand. In this regard, I align myself with Fielding and Fielding (1986) who, "rather than fight it out in the philosophical theater," prefer "to look again at the practical procedures that researchers use," and prefer to "deal with what researchers currently do than with the glorious but generally non-empirical accounts of the philosophers" (p. 20).

This is not to suggest that the philosophers' work is to be ignored. As Mosenthal (1985) states, researchers ought to have "freedom of choice but

not freedom from choice" (p. 7). Methodological decisions must be made and must be made with an understanding of the orientations to knowledge and the attendant values implicit in those decisions. What is being argued here is that the pragmatist must show himself or herself to be an instance of the "disciplined eclectic," a term Jaeger (1988) attributes to Merton (1975) and Schwab (1969).

It is further argued that the making of informed methodological decisions, though necessary, is not sufficient. Once made, it ought to be incumbent upon researchers to declare those decisions when reporting their work. It ought not to be left to the reader to "tease out" the fundamental epistemology driving a particular piece of research (Berkowitz, 1982).

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

The work reported here is cross-sectional in that it reports data collected across twelve sites. It is longitudinal in the limited sense that it traces attitudes and behaviours over the course of one academic year. That year was the first year of a three year study and it was during this time that instruments were developed and administered with two purposes in mind: one, in an exploratory mode, to gain insight into the nature of student-parent-teacher relationships through the use of qualitative and quantitative measures; and two, to refine the instruments for the subsequent years' work.

Sample

Quantitative Sample

A total of fourteen classrooms from two school districts participated in this research initially: seven classrooms in five schools from Site One and seven classrooms in three schools from Site Two. This brought the total number of volunteer participants to: fourteen teachers; 230 parents; and a total of 230 grade six and seven students. After the first round of quantitative data had been collected in the fall of 1990, two teachers withdrew from the project, leaving only two schools in Site Two, and a total of twelve participating teachers and 187 pupil/parent participants. At Time 2 the sample was further reduced to 162 students and their parents. Students leaving the school or the inability to obtain Time 2 survey data for both parent and student account for the smaller Time 2 sample.

Qualitative Sample

The qualitative sample is comprised of 12 teachers and a total of 32 student-parent dyads, each of whom was interviewed twice during the academic year.

In determining the number of parents and students to be interviewed, it was necessary to choose between what was desirable and what was feasible. There were three possible options.

- The first and the ideal was to interview all parents and students who had agreed to participate in the study. This would maximize the opportunity to obtain information on attitudes and practices across all twelve classrooms and to detect both intra- and inter-classroom differences and similarities. However, given that interviews were to be conducted on two separate occasions during the school year and at two different locations within the province, one far removed from the other, time and expense made it necessary to consider the remaining options:
- to interview all participating parents and students from a limited number of classrooms. This would increase the likelihood of detecting *intra-classroom* differences but at the possible expense of uncovering *inter-classroom* discrepancies;
- to interview a limited number of matched parents and students from every class. This would increase the likelihood of detecting *inter-classroom* differences but at the possible expense of uncovering *intra-classroom* differences.

The third option was adopted. If the qualitative component of the study were to err, then, it would do so at the possible expense of detecting intra- rather than inter-classroom variation.

The decision was then made to interview three parent-student dyads per classroom. The dyads were to be chosen using the Table of Random Numbers. Because some parents were either unavailable or refused to be interviewed, it was not possible to select interviewees by relying solely on the

Table of Random Numbers. For some classrooms it was necessary to overcome this difficulty by phoning each participating parent to determine if he or she were willing and available to be interviewed. This process continued until the desired number of interviewees had been identified. It is important to note that, given these problems, any attempt to interview all study participants would not have been successful. Furthermore, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to adopt the desirable practice of matching students on the basis of achievement, family constellation, socio-economic background, or any other set of criteria.

Teachers

Four female and eight male teachers participated in this study. Three teachers were in their first year of teaching; for others, classroom experience was not less than four years. Four teachers, though experienced, were newly assigned to the schools in which they were working at the time they participated in this study.

The Students and Their Families

The sample represents a broad range of socio-economic groupings. It does not, however, include families on the extremities of the socio-economic continuum. The very rich and the very poor are not represented. Neither is the sample representative of the widely diverse ethnic mix found in most cities and communities throughout British Columbia, particularly in the Lower Mainland. Although parents were not asked to provide information regarding nationality or country of origin, all those interviewed spoke English fluently and gave no impression of discord between home and societal or cultural norms. Table 3 provides a breakdown of students by grade level. It also provides a breakdown by gender for students who were interviewed. Further information regarding the grade six and seven students and their families who participated in this study is provided in the School and District Portraits that appear in Appendix 4.1.

Table 3
Sample

					Surveys		Interviews		
				Total Enrol. by Class	No. of Parent-Students Dyads who completed surveys		No. of Parent-Student Dyads interviewed at both T1 and T2	Students	
Site	School	Teacher	Grade		T1	T2		F	M
1	Radmore	Mr. Roy	6/7	29	20	15	2 *1	1	1
		Mr. Richards	6	28	19	16	2	1	1
	Scramstad	Mr. Simpson	5/6	24	11	11	3	2	1
	Quadra	Ms. Quaid	7	25	18	17	2	2	—
		Ms. Quinton	6	29	19	17	3 *2	2	1
	Valleyview	Mr. Vickers	6	29	14	11	3	2	1
	Walnut Grove	Mr. Whiston	7	30	20	16	3 *3	1	2
2	Avondale	Mr. Abrams	6/7	25	14	11	3	1	3
		Ms. Avril	6/7	21	10	9	2	—	2
		Mr. Ashdown	6/7	24	10	10	3	—	3
	Brookfield	Mr. Brooks	7	29	12	11	3	2	1
		Ms. Billings	6/7	28	20	18	3	3	1
		Total			187	162	32	17	15

Notes:
- School and teacher names are fictitious.
- T1 and T2 refers to Time 1 and Time 2 respectively.

*1 Missing data: T2 student data for one dyad.
*2 Missing data: T1 student and parent data for two dyads.
*3 Missing data: T2 student data for one dyad; T1 student data for another.

The Schools

Schools were located in two communities: one in the northern part of the province and the other in a suburb of Vancouver. They were selected on the basis of convenience, making use of school contacts provided by graduate students studying at the university. It is important to note, however, that none of the schools in which this work was conducted, either urban or rural, was obviously atypical of other schools with which members of the research team were acquainted—with the possible exception of the ethnic

mix of the school population. The schools and the districts in which they are situated are described in Appendix 4.1.

Instrument Development

Survey Instruments

A Likert-style survey instrument was developed for each group of participants—students, teachers, and parents. A five-point strongly agree (scored 1)—strongly disagree (scored 5) continuum with a mid-point option was used. Instruments were comprised of items designed to assess teacher, parent, and student attitudes and practices believed to be important to the development of collaborative relationships. Parallel items within the three surveys were used to assess the perception of attitudes and practices across referent groups. The process of developing domains (or scales) and scale items was guided by a reading of the parent involvement literature, a review of existing questionnaires, and the personal and professional experiences of members of the research team. (The original team consisted of eleven individuals who, collectively, represented university researchers, teachers, parents, and/or school administrators.)

The student questionnaire consisted of 51 items at Time 1 and 50 items at Time 2. The survey measured attitudes and behaviours in the following seven domains:

- student-parent school-related communication
- student valuing of school
- student perception of school-home communication
- student perception of academic competence
- student perception of student-teacher collaboration
- student perception of parent valuing of school
- student perception of peer values.

Students were also asked to rate their school on a 9-point scale (1 being very poor, 9 being excellent).

The parent questionnaire consisted of 61 items that measured attitudes and behaviours in the following nine domains:

- 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 for parent involvement
- perception of parent-school communication
- parent valuing of school
- perception of school climate
- parent perception of ability to help with school learning.

Additional items asked parents to rate the school on a 9-point scale and requested demographic data, including: family education level; the number of children and adults residing in the home; the number of parents/ guardians working outside the home; the gender of the respondent; and whether or not the respondent was or had been a teacher. At Time 2 open-ended questions were included to determine the perceived effects of parent and/or teacher participation of the workshops conducted during the first year of the study.

The teacher questionnaire consisted of 46 items that measured attitudes and behaviours in the following six domains:

- teacher attitudes toward parent involvement
- teacher perception of student responsibility
- teacher perception of parent efficacy
- teacher efficacy

- teacher perception of student collaboration
- teacher collegiality.

In each survey, questions were ordered in such a way that: one, the various items constituting each dimension were positioned randomly throughout the questionnaire; and two, the more sensitive items, those relating to the constitution of the family unit and family educational levels, appeared at the end of the instrument. As well, some items were reversed to guard against the adverse effects of response sets. Recognizing the limitations questionnaires impose, spaces were left between each item to provide respondents with an opportunity to make any comments they felt necessary regarding the question or the response. (Time 1 and 2 surveys appear in Appendices 4.2 through 4.4.)

Pretesting the Questionnaire

Prior to the instruments being administered, each member of the research team independently reviewed the questionnaires to assess item readability and face validity. Changes were made when there was consensus amongst group members that suggested wording changes clarified meaning and/or readability.

All items on all questionnaires were also examined following the Time 1 collection period. Using Cronbach's Alpha, weak items were identified and adjusted to improve scale reliability. Adjustments included the deletion of weak items, the rewording of those that seemingly caused confusion, and the addition of items that, it was hypothesized, would more accurately tap the construct being measured. Adjustments were kept to a minimum and followed Gable's (1986, p. 147) advice that when items are to be added to an existing scale to enhance reliability, they should clearly parallel the best items on the existing scale. Changes made to each instrument following each administration are reported in the Appendices. Scale analyses and refinement are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

Interview Schedules

Semi-structured interview schedules with an open-ended question component were prepared for the three groups noted above. The topics broached in the open-ended interview questions probed further into the domains represented by the various scales. Time 1 and Time 2 interview schedules were identical with two exceptions: one, whereas in the Fall participants often made reference to previous years' experiences, in the Spring they were asked to focus only on the current school year; and two, during the second round of interviews, respondents were asked if any changes pertinent to the study had occurred during the current school year.

Pretesting the Interview Schedules

Prior to interviewing study participants, mock interviews were conducted with individuals representing each referent group but who were not participating in the study. The purpose of this procedure was to determine if any item needed to be reworded to ensure comprehension. In addition, members of the research team consulted after each data collection period to determine if any items were problematic and required adjustment. Items were altered when wording consistently appeared to confuse or mislead respondents. (Interview schedules appear in Appendices 4.5 through 4.7.)

Procedures

Accessing Sites

Once a school had been identified as a potential site, school district approval was sought and in all cases attained. In some instances, it was the school principal who was approached first. Although support was granted in each case, it became clear that principal agreement did not always assure participation of the teachers whose classrooms had been volunteered by the building administrator. In one case, although initially agreeing to participate in the study, the teacher effectively withdrew her support either by failing to return phone calls or by failing to be available for interviews at

times she had previously deemed convenient. This situation, however, was not common and all other teachers seemingly were participating of their own accord. While in some instances principals were approached first, in others, teachers were the first to be contacted. Once interest was confirmed, the principal approval was sought and in all cases obtained.

The next step was to seek parental support. This was done by requesting students to deliver to their parents or guardians a letter that outlined the purposes of the study, assured confidentiality, and encouraged involvement. (See Appendix 4.8 for a copy of the Letter of Consent.) It will be noted that the Letter of Consent provides information regarding three possible levels of participation:

- full participation—this involved parents agreeing to attend a workshop on parent involvement and to implement at least some of the practices recommended at the workshop for working with students on school-related learning activities in the home. It also involved agreeing to a series of brief telephone calls during the three year period that the project was expected to run;
- limited participation—this involved agreeing to complete a questionnaire and to be interviewed in the fall and the spring of the current academic year;
- no participation.

For a variety of reasons, parental time constraints being chief amongst them, the distinction between full and limited participation was abandoned and the two categories were collapsed during analysis.

Data Collection: Questionnaires

The instruments were administered in all classrooms at the same time of the year, within a day or two: in October/November of 1990 (Time 1) and again in May/June of 1991 (Time 2). The purpose of the second administration was to detect any changes in attitudes and/or behaviours that may have occurred during the school year.

All questionnaires were administered prior to the commencement of the interview process. Students were asked to complete the survey in class with either the teacher or a member of the research team presiding. To protect confidentiality, completed questionnaires were returned in envelopes provided for that purpose. Parent surveys were completed in the home. Their return to the classroom relied on student co-operation. Several trips to each school were often required to encourage completion and return of the parent surveys. Teacher questionnaires were completed at a time of their choosing or immediately prior to being interviewed.

Data Collection: Interviews

As with the questionnaires, interview data were collected on two occasions during the school year: once in October/November 1990 (Time 1) and again in May/June 1991 (Time 2). Parents and students were interviewed individually either in the home or at the school in a room that had been set aside for that purpose. Teachers were interviewed at the school site. Student interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Parent and teacher interviews lasted as long as an hour. All interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

Interviews were conducted by all members of the research team. To ensure similarity of approach, designated team members conducted tape-recorded pilot interviews with individuals who were not study participants. These interviews were then critiqued at subsequent research meetings to ensure, as much as possible, a common approach to interviewing, including the use of probes. To facilitate this aspect of interviewing, some probes were specified on the interview schedule. When these did not elicit sufficient information, interviewers were instructed to use non-directive probes such as: “can you say more?” or “uh-huh” followed by silence.

Interview schedules were intended to guide the interview. It was not considered necessary, or necessarily advisable, to follow the schedule precisely. However, it was critical that the intent of each question be addressed at some point during the interview—syntax but not semantics could be

altered. For instance, if a student did not understand a question such as, "Do you feel you count for something in your classroom?" the interviewer was at liberty to rephrase the item. In this example, the question was often reworded in the following way: "Do you feel you are an important member of the class?" Another departure from the interview schedule occurred when the interviewer chose not to ask a particular question because information pertinent to that item had been provided in the response to a previously asked question.

It was anticipated that interviews would vary somewhat but in accordance with the guidelines noted above. With this qualification in mind, these differences were not considered problematic. In this way, the work was guided by Mishler (1986) who argues that attempts to be too standardized may be misguided. Drawing on Lazarfeld's (1935) notion of the "principle of division," which is to adapt "that pattern of (the) questionnaire to the structural pattern of the respondent" (p. 22), Mishler advocates "a rather loose and liberal handling of a questionnaire by an interviewer." He argues that it is "more important that the question be fixed in its meaning, than in the wording" (Lazarfeld, 1935, p. 4, cited in Mishler, 1986, p. 22).

Teacher Workshops

A one-day teacher workshop was held in Site 1 and Site 2 in January and February, respectively. Teachers from all participating schools met during regular working hours at a facility separate from the schools in which they taught. In Site 1 project funds covered the cost of substitute teachers. In Site 2 the district granted the workshops professional development status and, accordingly, paid the cost of substitute teachers.

The Site 1 workshop was conducted by an outside consultant recommended to the project by a well-respected researcher working and publishing in the area of parent involvement. The consultant had extensive experience as a classroom teacher, public school administrator, parent, and workshop facilitator in San Diego, California, an area well-known for its commitment to parent involvement. All Site 1 members of the research

team attended the workshop and participated in group discussions. As well, two Site 2 researchers attended this workshop, serving in the capacity of facilitators-in-training.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the benefits of parent involvement as defined for the purposes of this study. Then, through small group discussions, teachers reflected on existing attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement. The facilitator then introduced a variety of strategies designed to promote teacher-parent communication and parent involvement in student learning. Participants were provided with several handouts: some provided suggestions on how to establish and maintain positive working relationships with parents; others were sample materials that teachers could use immediately in their own classrooms. Examples of the kinds of handouts distributed included:

- tips for understanding and relating to parents;
- principles for developing family-school partnerships;
- suggestions for conducting effective parent-teacher conferences; and
- suggestions on how to get parents involved in learning activities in the home.

Sample materials included:

- a sample letter used to inform parents of teacher expectations regarding notebooks, assignments, textbooks, and homework;
- a model student-teacher-parent contract;
- sample teacher newsletters; television viewing log for students;
- weekly homework-television schedule for students;
- student progress updates;
- teacher phone call record sheet;
- daily suggestions provided in calendar format to stimulate school related student-parent communication.

All strategies focused on the importance of teacher-initiated attempts to reach out to parents, to open the doors of communication, and to provide parents with concrete examples of classroom learning, academic progress, and ways they could support the learning process in the home.

Toward the end of the workshop, teachers were asked to select and publicly announce which strategy or strategies they considered applicable to the context in which they were presently working and that they would be willing to implement in their classrooms. This step was taken to encourage commitment to and implementation of new practices. (The Agenda for the Time 1 Site 2 Teacher Workshop appears in Appendix 4.9.) Workshop evaluation forms were then completed. (A copy of the evaluation form appears in Appendix 4.10.)

The Site 2 teacher workshop was conducted by the two researchers who had served as facilitators-in-training. The Site 1 and Site 2 workshops were similar in both format and materials distributed. It should noted that, as a courtesy, teachers at both Sites were informed of the information presented in parallel workshops for parents.

Informal Follow-up Meetings

Following the Easter break, an informal dinner meeting was held with teachers at each of the two sites. The purposes were threefold:

- one, to follow up on individual teacher efforts to implement those parent involvement practices to which they had committed themselves during the workshop. This was done to encourage commitment to the project's goals;
- two, to provide a forum for teachers to discuss with one another their progress to date. This was done to provide an opportunity for peer support;
- to demonstrate appreciation to the teachers for participating in the project.

Parent Workshops

Parent workshops were conducted within a few days of the teacher workshops. The consultant who facilitated the teacher workshop also conducted the parent workshop in Site 1. All Site 1 members of the research team attended this session. As with the teacher workshops, two researchers served as facilitators in training. The event was held in the evening at a local high school.

The facilitator first spoke of the benefits of parent involvement in children's learning. She then presented a variety of strategies and techniques designed to promote positive home-school communication and student learning in the home. Once again, handouts were distributed, some of which included:

- worksheets designed to prepare parents for parent-teacher conferences;
- homework/television viewing schedule;
- suggestions for encouraging and assisting with reading in the home;
- suggestions on how to improve study skill habits;
- suggestions on how to do mathematics in the home; and
- a checklist of what parents can do in the home to help their children learn.

Parents were given an opportunity to discuss these issues amongst themselves in small groups. Questions arising during this part of the program were brought forward to the larger group for further discussion. Before leaving the workshop, and prior to completing an evaluation form, parents were asked to identify and commit to implementing at least one strategy discussed that evening.

As with the Site 2 teacher workshop, the parent workshop was conducted by the two members of the research team who had served as facilitators-in-training. Once again the format and materials used, with permission, were those introduced by the external consultant. In Site 2, however,

workshops were held in the evening in each of the participating schools, rather than in one central location as was the case in Site 1. (The Parent Workshop Agenda appears in Appendix 4.11.)

Data Analysis

General Comments

The benefits of using different data collection strategies were discussed in Chapter Three. What was not discussed at that time was how one links or integrates the data these strategies yield. The study reported here was influenced by Caracelli and Greene's (1993) work in this area. They have identified four integrative data analysis strategies for studies that include "at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), where neither type of method is inherently linked to a particular inquiry paradigm or philosophy" (p. 195). The four strategies are:

- data transformation, which begins by converting either numerical data to narrative or narrative data to numerical. The transformed data are then analyzed jointly;
- typology development, which begins by using one type of data to develop categories, which are then used in the analysis of the contrasting data type;
- extreme case analysis, which uses one type of data to identify and explain outliers. The contrasting data type is then used to refine the explanation for these outliers;
- data consolidation/merging, which begins by analyzing narrative and numerical data simultaneously to generate variables that are then expressed in either quantitative or qualitative terms.

Typology development is the strategy adopted here. First, interview data were coded and analyzed to identify variables associated with the presence or absence of collaborative relationships between and amongst

teachers, students, and parents. Using this information, teachers were positioned along a collaborative/non-collaborative continuum. Quantitative data were then used to determine if these placements were confirmed by the survey data.

The decision to analyze the qualitative data first was purposeful. Familiarity with quantitative outcomes could create predispositions that could negatively affect the coding of the interview data. To avoid this possible source of contamination, analysis proceeded by working with the qualitative data first.

Data Analysis: Qualitative Data

The interview data were coded, categorized, and then analyzed for themes and patterns according to the conventions of qualitative data analysis as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984) and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

The computer program HyperRESEARCH was used to facilitate the process of analyzing the qualitative data. When working with HyperRESEARCH, the first step is to determine what is to constitute the "case." This is an important step because it determines the degree of flexibility with which subsequent data reduction procedures and analyses can occur. The case may be defined in any one of a number of ways—it may be an individual or a group of individuals at any level of aggregation.

The issue of flexibility is associated with the program's ability to generate reports listing all source data to which a particular code has been applied. The program does have the capacity to *pyramid up*. That is to say, reports can be generated that draw on coded data from a single case (for instance, a single teacher), all cases (for instance, all teachers), or from any number of specified cases (for instance, a subgrouping of teachers). HyperRESEARCH, however, cannot *pyramid down*. Therefore, if a case were defined as "all members of a referent group," all teachers for instance, it would not be possible to separate out data pertaining to an individual

teacher. All teacher data would have been irrevocably aggregated at the level of the group.

Given the grounded theory approach to data analysis adopted here and given the intent to determine inter-classroom differences, if any, aggregating at the level of the referent group was not appropriate. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the case was defined as the individual student, parent, or teacher. This decision permitted the generation of reports that combined data in a variety of ways, many of which could not have been predicted prior to the onset of data analysis and the "memoing" activities that occurred during this process.

Code Development

Once the case had been determined, the next step was to code the interview data. Constas (1992) notes that "contrary to what some have claimed, categories do not simply 'emerge' from the data. In actuality, categories are created, and meanings are attributed by researchers who, wittingly or unwittingly, embrace a particular configuration of analytical preferences" (p. 254). He urges qualitative researchers to make public these analytical preferences as failure to do so may "vitiate the clarity of a given empirical presentation" (p. 254).

Constas (1992) breaks the coding process, or "category development" as he calls it, into three stages:

- origination—determining the "locus of category construction," of which there are five:
  - the study participants themselves;
  - the researcher and his or her own "interests, views, or intellectual constructions;"
  - the goals or objectives of the program being evaluated;
  - the literature associated with the phenomena being examined;

  - a particular method of analysis that has a "preordained set of analytical concepts," such as hermeneutics.

- verification—justifying the origination and application of the codes used. Constas describes six sources of justification:
  - external experts;
  - logic and reasoning and the notion of face validity;
  - theoretical arguments or findings of previous research;
  - the distinctiveness, or mutual exclusivity, of categories;
  - inter-rater reliability checks or repeated coding procedures;
  - the participants themselves.
- nomination—identifying the source and the implied values of the labels applied to categories. As Constas (1992) states: "names used to describe categories do not stand as a set of neutral descriptors. The process of naming a phenomenon invokes a certain power and often establishes a real or illusory impression of knowledge and certainty" (p. 260). In Constas' schema, names are derived from the same sources as those listed under origination.

Constas notes as well that there is a temporal component to coding, which should be specified. A researcher should report whether codes were determined: before the data were collected (a priori); after the data were collected (a posteriori); or at various stages of the investigative process (iterative).

Seeing merit in Constas' recommendations, the decisions made during the coding process are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Documentation of Category Development

Component of Categorization	Temporal Designation		
Origination	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?			
participants			
researcher			x
program			
literature	x		x
preordained			
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
external experts			
logic/face validity		x	
previous research		x	
mutual exclusivity			
repeated coding procedures		x	
participants			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
participants			
researcher		x	
program			
literature		x	
preordained			

Adapted from Constas, (1992).

The coding process began with some preconceived categories in mind. The use of semi-structured interview schedules suggests that the work was approached with some entry-level suppositions, based on literature and logic, about barriers and bridges to collaborative relationships between and amongst teachers, parents, and students. For example, it was expected that the interview data would reveal instances of: student parent communication regarding homework, student teacher communication, and student perceptions of whether or not they count for something in their respective classrooms. The more sensitive understandings, however, emerged once coding began and are reflected in the more finely tuned categorization of information that occurred during this process. For instance, unanticipated at

the outset were some student responses that provided insight into aspects of the teacher-student relationship that were associated with students feeling valued in the classroom.

Before coding began, the writer participated in three, full-day group discussions with volunteer graduate student research assistants who were associated with the larger project. At these meetings, codes previously generated by several members of the research team were defined, applied, and then discussed. Coding for the purposes of this study, then, proceeded with a broad understanding of the types of codes that would emerge and how these codes would be applied. (See Appendix 4.12 for Master Code Lists.)

Although all Time 1 and Time 2 interview data had been coded previously by other members of the research team, for the purposes of the research reported here the writer coded all interview data herself. The decision not to use previously coded material was made in order to have a more intimate connection with and understanding of the data. This decision also permitted an opportunity to engage in "memoing," a kind of preliminary data analysis that occurs during the coding process and one that is highly recommended by Miles and Huberman (1984) for its ability to generate hypotheses.

Coding Conventions

The following conventions were used during the coding process.

Depth of Coding

All words spoken during an interview were coded within the context of the idea unit. A "not coded" category was generated to capture any information that was considered superfluous to the intent of the study. In this way, no data were lost and the researcher's interpretation of what constituted unimportant information remained open to public scrutiny. This code, for example, was used when a parent's commentary focused on a child who was not a study participant. It was also used when parents discussed

school-related issues that did not pertain to the study. The "not coded" category was used as well to label those parts of a transcript that were rendered meaningless as a consequence of inaudible recordings.

Unit of Analysis

Semantic, rather than grammatical, units guided the analysis. Information was coded using the notion of the idea unit. In some cases, the idea unit constituted a single word; in others, a phrase, a sentence, or a group of sentences. The decision to code a single word (for example "yes," "no," or "uh huh") was made after considerable debate with other members of the research team. The argument against this stance was that single words of this sort convey nothing of significance. The argument for adopting the procedure used here was that the conventions of spoken English neither demand nor set up the expectation that the wording of a question be repeated in a respondent's reply. Both respondent and listener assume that each understands that the text of the question is implied in the single word response. By way of illustration, when a student was asked "Does your teacher call home sometimes for help?" the words "No, not usually" were interpreted to mean "No, my teacher does not usually call home for help" and were thus considered appropriate for coding.

Level of Inference

During the initial coding process, level of inference was kept to a minimum so that the product of the initial stage of analysis was as objectively true to the raw data as possible. "Inferential leaps," or second and third level inferencing, were left to a later stage of analysis at which point such inferences could be made explicit and thus remain open to public scrutiny. For instance, when students commented on the ways in which parents assisted with homework, consideration was given to coding this information not only under "parent involvement in home learning" but also under the code "parent values school." In the end, only the former code was used, leaving

the inference that this was an example of how parents demonstrate their valuing of schooling to a later stage of analysis.

Level of Generality

Coding proceeded at the lowest level of generality, with the understanding that codes could be condensed at a later stage of analysis. Should the decision be made to condense codes at a later point in time, the rationale for doing so could be stated explicitly and thus left open to scrutiny. For example, rather than code all instances of parent involvement in home learning under a code of that name, separate codes were developed for the various ways in which parents involve themselves in their children's learning.

Directional Coding

Directional codes were applied to each idea unit. For example, each instance of "teacher attitude to parent involvement" was recorded as "positive," "negative," or "neutral."

Parallel Coding across Referent Groups

To facilitate cross-referent group comparisons and to counter the possible negative effects of self-report data, parallel codes were created for teacher, parent, and student interviews. For instance, the master code list for both parent and student interviews included the category "sp comm" (student-parent communication). This had the effect of capturing both parent and student perceptions of the kind and extent of school-related communication that occurred between the two.

Double Coding

Bearing in the mind the comments reported under "level of inference," it is important to note that codes were not in all instances mutually exclusive. It was not unusual for more than one code to be applied to the same source

material. For instance, a child was asked: "Could your parents help you learn at school or at home more than they do?" She replied: "I don't think so. They do a good job." This response provided information pertinent to two areas of interest and was thus coded accordingly—once under the heading "student perception of the parent's ability to help with homework" and again under the heading "parent could do more to help—no."

Repeated Information

The "not coded" category was also used for information previously reported in an interview but repeated in response to a probe. This convention was established to avoid unwarranted weighting of such information. However, when an interviewee returned to a previous topic of his or her own accord, it was assumed that this issue was particularly salient to the respondent and was thus coded again.

The Open Ended Category

A special code was established to record any response to the final question asked of each parent, student, and teacher participant: "Is there anything I haven't asked you on this topic that you would like to mention?" This information was considered particularly salient to the respondent and thus merited a code of its own. This information, however, was also coded under other appropriate headings.

Coding Procedures

For each referent group, coding proceeded in the following manner:

- fine and directional coding of all interview data was completed. During this process a list was kept indicating the point at which each new code emerged. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to assess the applicability of a new code to previously coded material;
- because the original number of codes created far exceeded the capabilities of the HyperRESEARCH program (and were too numerous to be

practical), it was necessary to collapse some codes. Some detail was lost in this process, but the resulting list of codes was more manageable and yet sufficiently detailed to permit meaningful analysis. Decisions were made regarding where it was beneficial to retain detailed coding and where loss of detail would not be problematic. For instance, for parent interviews, all detailed codes that referred to previous experiences with teachers or schools were collapsed under the new code "previous." However, codes that referenced parent reports of parent involvement strategies used by teachers participating in this study were retained.

Coding Reliability

The following steps were taken to ensure coding consistency.

- Coding was completed by referent group. That is to say, all teacher interviews were coded before moving on to parent then student data. This was done to ensure that coding was not negatively affected by lapses in time or the coding of other referent group interviews;
- Five interviews from each referent group that had been coded by other researchers were scanned to determine consistency of interpretation and assignment of codes. In some cases, code names differed somewhat in syntax, but not in semantics. No glaring discrepancies were detected;
- HyperRESEARCH reports were generated that listed all textual data assigned to each code. The writer then scanned this information to detect inconsistencies. Only minor adjustments were required, which involved relabeling source data that had been incorrectly coded and deleting source data that inadvertently had been coded twice.

Summarizing the Data

When all coding was completed, HyperRESEARCH was used to generate reports that listed all codes used in each case (or interview) and all source data associated with each instance of each code. Tally sheets were then prepared that reported the number of times each code had been used in each interview. This was done for two reasons:

- one, the tally sheets made it possible to determine which codes had been used with sufficient regularity across several, if not all, interviews to permit comparative analyses.
- two, the tally sheets permitted an initial scanning of the data to determine if patterns were emerging in parent, student, and teacher perceptions of attitudes and behaviours.

It was necessary, however, to approach the frequency counts with caution. They were used for very general purposes only. Because a number of individuals had been involved in the interview process and because the transcripts revealed that some interviewers were not as persistent as others in probing or as talented in eliciting information, a more precise use of frequency counts was deemed inappropriate.

Report Generation

One important feature of HyperRESEARCH is its ability to generate reports. The variety of ways in which reports can be generated greatly facilitates data reduction and analysis. This capability also permits a shift from first to second level inferencing in a way that leaves the researcher's decision-making process open to public examination—in as much as the original codes are still identifiable. (A sample report appears in Appendix 4.15.)

Developing Teacher Profiles

Process

The next step in the data reduction process was to develop teacher profiles. This was done in two stages. First, using self-report data provided by the teachers themselves, individual profiles were constructed that report each teacher's: attitudes and practices regarding parent involvement; attitudes towards students, both in general and with regard to student ability to accept responsibility for learning; and teacher efficacy. The teacher profiles also report general contextual information to give the reader a sense of the school and community environment in which the teacher was working at the time this research was conducted.

Secondly, and without referring back to the profiles just described, another set of teacher profiles was created. These reported *parent perceptions* of: the teacher's attitude toward parents and parent involvement; teacher parent involvement strategies; teacher regard for students; and student regard for school and teacher; and *student perceptions* of: the classroom learning environment; whether he or she "counted for something" in the classroom; and student regard for school and teacher.

Finally, teacher, parent, and student data were combined to form a complete profile for each participating teacher. On the basis of these profiles, teachers were labeled as either collaborative or non-collaborative.

From a conceptual point of view, using data from all three referent groups to generate individual teacher profiles is consistent with the study's emphasis on the importance of triadic relationships (between and amongst teachers, parents, and students) as a measure of effective classrooms and, by extension, effective schools.

From a methodological perspective, the approach alleviates the possible negative effects of self-report data. This was considered particularly important given that teachers are known to have a tendency to overstate the extent to which they engage parents in student learning. The three-way

approach to data analysis, therefore, permits a cross-validation of information provided. Cross-validating the data has two effects: one, it either substantiates or calls into the question the teacher self-report data; and two, parent and student data provide important information regarding teacher practices that, for whatever reasons, the teacher him- or herself had not reported. Discrepancies are discussed in the context of the teacher profiles.

Selection of Domains

Domains selected for further analysis derive from two sources. Those pertaining to *parent involvement* reflect researcher interests and biases that were present at the time the study began. Domains referring to *teacher attitudes towards students* reflect an emerging appreciation of what parents really care about and how that ultimately affects parental attitudes toward specific teachers and teacher-parent interaction. It also reflects a question that emerged as analysis began: what is the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward students and their attitudes toward and practice of working collaboratively with parents? Methodologically, the emergence of unanticipated domains that call for further enquiry reflects the importance of the grounded theory approach to research.

Teacher Portraits and the Use of Quotations

Constas (1992) has observed that although qualitative researchers strive to make public the private worlds of those they study, they often fail to make public their own private world of analytic and interpretive inferencing. This study addresses that legitimate concern by making extensive use of quotations. This allows the reader to assess the plausibility of the researcher's interpretations. Quotations were selected on the basis of their ability to represent the speaker's attitudes and/or practices. It will be noted that occasionally quotations reveal inconsistencies in attitudes or between attitudes and practices. Inconsistencies are considered vitally important data in constructing valid and complete profiles.

It should be noted that the analysis accepts all that is said in the self-report data at face value. Researcher comments are reserved for the discussion section that follows. It should also be noted that all teacher names are fictitious as are the schools with which they are associated. (Teachers can be linked to the schools profiled in Appendix 4.1 by matching the first letter of the teacher's name with the first letter of the school's name.)

Chapter Five: Qualitative Findings: Teacher Profiles Based on Teacher, Parent, and Student Reports

Mr. Abrams: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Abrams is teaching in a "brand new school," which he describes as a "wonderful school" with a "good staff (that was) selected very carefully." It is a "place where things are always happening," and where "problems are dealt with."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Mr. Abrams describes "the majority of parents" of the children in his classroom as "relatively well educated." Lack of formal schooling, therefore, does not constitute a barrier or "threat" that would prevent parents from interacting with the school or from helping their children with school-related learning tasks in the home. If this talent and interest is to be used to fullest advantage, Mr. Abrams is of the opinion that teachers must keep parents informed of what is happening in the classroom and, more specifically, how they can support classroom learning in the home. His perception that parents are both capable and willing to help their children is reflected in the kinds of parent involvement strategies he uses.

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

At the beginning of the year Mr. Abrams informs parents "with a letter that goes home, also on the phone, that (he is) always interested in having parents in to help." He mentions several ways parents could make a contribution to the classroom, which he runs on an "open door policy." At the end of the year, however, he reports that with the exception of a parent who helped with computers during the Fall and one who is "coming in in June to do an art project," he has "not tried particularly hard" to make parents a part of classroom life.

He does, however, keep parents well informed and believes that "they know what is going on in the classroom." In September he sends home a "form letter (he) made up," which provides "an outline for every subject from setting up their book to an assignment. The parents get it all." Parents also receive an outline of what will be taught during the year.

The "student planner" is another means through which parents are kept informed. "During the last ten minutes of the day," students record information regarding tests and the due dates of homework assignments and projects. Mr. Abrams views the planners as "a means of communication" and "encourage(s) all parents to sign it." "At this level," he says, the "student planner is a wonderful idea. . . . Parents understand that they can write in it and it gets back to me." When asked if parents take advantage of the opportunity to correspond in this way, he responds: "Yes, (but) not very often."

Not only does Mr. Abrams keep parents informed, he also encourages them to become involved in an instructional capacity in the home. In the area of language arts, parents serve as "the last editor" for writing projects that go home "with a form so that the parents have to give a positive edit." A benefit of this practice is that "parents see the process because they are doing it at home." In the area of social studies, Mr. Abrams "might have them do a home assignment. Some steps are done at school; some at home.

. . . The child is to select one topic. It is signed by the parents. The parents are there not to do it but to be there as a facilitator."

At the end of the year, Mr. Abrams provides a specific example of his willingness to encourage parents and students to work together. In a letter addressed to parents he explained that students were studying "The Secret Garden" in class. In this letter, which parents signed and returned, he encouraged them to read the book with their child. The results were positive. Mr. Abrams reports that "student insight into that novel was great because of the discussion (that occurred) before coming into class."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Mr. Abrams feels it is important that "kids know where you are coming from, . . . when things are due, . . . what's coming up." For these reasons, the use of the student planner is mandatory for all students. He provides students with ten minutes at the end of each day to record assignments, due dates, tests, and the like. By using the planner, students are given the opportunity to develop the responsibility and time management skills he values.

Student Responsibility

Mr. Abrams believes that students, in general, can take responsibility for their own education. He notes, however, that there are those who either cannot or will not do so. At the beginning of the year, he identifies the students "who are not taking it seriously." These are "the ones that (he) want(s) to focus on and want(s) to know why." In these cases, he comments, "I get the parents involved."

At the end of the year, Mr. Abrams reports that it was "a real pulling of the teeth" to have students buy into his standards, adopt the organizational style for notebooks and assignments, and use the student handbook regularly. To encourage student responsibility and parent support,

Mr. Abrams "started off by having (the student planner) signed on a regular basis." Gradually, however, students became sufficiently responsible that parental signatures were no longer deemed necessary.

Teacher Efficacy

Mr. Abrams does not speak specifically of his success, or lack thereof, with students. Therefore, it is necessary to look for indicators of professional accomplishment. One such measure is his perception of the relationship he shares with parents with whom, he reports, he has a "very good rapport." Although he "might not see all the parents all the time," he "get(s) this feedback through phone calls and memos." Another indicator of professional accomplishment is his belief that he has been successful in bringing around those students who, at the beginning of the year, were not demonstrating a sense of personal responsibility toward their work.

Commentary

There are two noticeable differences between Time 1 and Time 2: one, Mr. Abrams has noticed an increase in student responsibility; and two, there is an increase in planned parent involvement activity—a change he attributes in part to something "I was thinking about myself" and in part to "our project."

Some of the activities Mr. Abrams mentioned at the beginning of the year have not occurred by the time of the second interview. Nonetheless, his orientation to these activities reveals a willingness to have parents serve in an instructional capacity. For instance, with field trips, he views parents "not just as a means of transportation." Rather, he says, "I use them as an assistant with a small group of students. They are responsible to help the child learn."

Mr. Abrams: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Of the three families interviewed from Mr. Abrams' class, two report having children (one a boy, the other a girl) who enjoy school, who demonstrate a responsible approach to their studies, and with whom they share a positive parent-student working relationship.

The third family presents a less happy scenario: a grandmother whose "retirement present was inheriting a little boy" of six, which, she says, was "not the best kind" of present. "I started this job (parenting) over forty years ago . . . that's a long haul." This woman's fatigue is apparent in her observation that Mr. Abrams "knows that I am almost burned out with resistance." Her grandson, who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Deficiency (ADDS), "has resisted any interference or help from us" and "figures that we have no business even seeing his school work." He is a young man who, in his grandmother's opinion, "doesn't take responsibility for anything."

Teacher Regard for Students

Each parent reports that Mr. Abrams respects his students. Some of the substantiating evidence is specific; some, more general. For the grandmother, it is the perception that Mr. Abrams "knows your strengths and weaknesses;" for the mother who has a daughter in this class, it is "just the comments he makes about" the child; and for the other mother, it is the belief that he "always brings out the positive" in her son. For this parent, further evidence that Mr. Abrams thinks well of students is her perception that he "respects" the fact that her son is "fairly outspoken." She observes as well that he gives students "more responsibilities," "praises" them, and "seems to find the positives over the negatives."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Both at the beginning of the year and at the end, two of the three parents report that their children have a positive attitude toward Mr. Abrams: one parent indicates that her son "likes this class probably the most" of any he has been in and reports that he "respects his teacher and works well with him." He "knows he has to do all his work before (going to bed) or gets up early in the morning by himself and does all his work. . . . I guess he knows that he gets punished. Not punished, but his teacher makes him stay after school if he doesn't do his work."

The other parent notes that her daughter "very much likes Mr. Abrams" and "likes to have everything just perfect the way he likes it." Her daughter has a "more positive attitude . . . this year . . . than last" and she "seems more enthusiastic." The mother attributes this enthusiasm to Mr. Abrams' involvement in extra-curricular sports activities, which provide the focal point of her daughter's school life. She "seems to centre her activities in that area (sports), and if she does well it sort of spills over into her school work as well. I like so see that." This mother believes "the fact that her (daughter's) teacher leads a lot of those physical activities . . . is helping" her child.

Even for the young man living with his grandparents, the year appears to have gone well under Mr. Abrams' direction. Whereas at the beginning of the year the grandmother admits to going "to bed at night wondering how we are going to get through the next morning. It's that bad. He really doesn't want to go;" at the end of the year she reports that while "he doesn't get up that fast . . . he doesn't object to going (to school) or anything like 'I'm not going' or anything like this or 'what good is school?' I don't hear that."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

All parents feel comfortable in Mr. Abrams' company, and all anticipate that he would describe his relationship with parents as "good." He is de-

scribed as being "very open," "always willing to talk to you," and "real positive." Furthermore, he "always invites you to be part of the class if you're at the school and will show you the work." When asked whether Mr. Abrams sees parents as partners in her child's education, one parent responds: "Yes, I think he does see it that way." She provides as evidence the experience of her daughter coming home and saying: "You have to help me with this. He (Mr. Abrams) said so." To this mother, her involvement in her child's learning is "a prerequisite for her to be able to get through the work."

The discouraged grandmother mentions that she and Mr. Abrams have not had a lot of contact over the year, but she does not attribute this to a lack of caring or commitment but rather to Mr. Abrams' understanding that she "can't cope anymore with complaints and things like that. . . . So they have left us alone as much as possible." She reports, however, that Mr. Abrams has indicated that "he was satisfied" with her grandson's efforts and that the young man was "really making a real effort and things were being done."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

These parents provide several examples of how Mr. Abrams involves them in their children's learning. One mother explains that her daughter insists that parents "are supposed to help" with homework. She also speaks of Mr. Abrams' practice of showing "us (parents) exactly how he expects them (students) to set up their work." As a consequence, she says, "I know myself what to expect when (my daughter) brings it home. How to have everything done just right." While these details are not academically focused, they nonetheless reflect criteria the teacher uses when grading student work. Another parent mentions Mr. Abrams' approach to teaching "The Secret Garden," which is to encourage parents to read and discuss the book with their children.

Interestingly, no parent mentions: the curricular overview that Mr. Abrams speaks of; the fact that he views them as "the last editor" of any

written work; or the student planner, which Mr. Abrams considers "a means of communication." One practice a parent reports that Mr. Abrams does not, is the student-completed evaluation sheets, which allows the child to "evaluate himself and what they thought of themselves." This, the parent commented, "was really helpful."

It is interesting to note as well that although Mr. Abrams believes that parents "know what is going on in the classroom," no parent mentions this specifically. And yet, there is no evidence that would contradict one parent's end-of-year assessment that this has been "a good school year." Parents perceive this teacher to be approachable, one who will let them know if there is any problem, one who respects their children and who brings out the best in them.

Commentary

Parent comments, for the most part, focus on increased maturity, responsible attitudes to schoolwork, and the teacher's ability to bring out the best in their children. There is no hint in any of the three interviews, either at the beginning of the year or at the end, of any dissatisfaction with the parent-teacher relationship or the parent's perception of the teacher-student relationship. As well, on the basis of the information the parents provide, be it the observation of more active involvement in the school or the absence of active resistance, these students appear to hold their teacher in high regard.

Mr. Abrams: Student Perceptions

The students from Mr. Abrams' class speak well of the school and their teacher. One student reports that "everybody works in the school . . . it is not that we have a super high person and then a low person and then a really low person. It is usually like the teacher looks over you and then they take care of you." This is a young man who feels he counts for something in his classroom because the other students call him "'whiz' or something like

that." His female classmate also feels that students count for something just "by going to school and (being) involved with everything." She comments, too, that students are "accepted by people . . . the teachers." In addition to these general comments, she also refers to specific teacher practices. She says, for instance, that Mr. Abrams "makes you feel good after you answer a question" or "you get a good grade or something."

Even the young man whose grandmother describes him as resistant speaks well of Mr. Abrams. When asked if he feels like he counts for something in the classroom, he responds positively. He attributes this to "the teacher. Like, if one person's having trouble, he'll ask if they could help him. . . . If someone's stronger in one point, like math, they'll help someone that's not doing as good. Just things like that."

Students speak positively of the classroom learning environment. "You have to learn . . . it's not a place to fool around." And if learning is a problem, Mr. Abrams "will help us if we need help. We can come after school and stuff. And you can come around in the morning, or lunch, and recess." "He told us that at the start and he keeps telling us that if we need any help we can just come in." This last comment is made by the student who is characterized by his grandmother as someone who "doesn't take responsibility for anything."

Students also comment that Mr. Abrams allows them to help one another. "When you need help, you can ask the people next (to) you if the teacher's busy." Another student explains that most of his friends are in the class and "they help me if I'm stuck on a problem, and I help them." The students perceive this classroom to be place where they come to learn, not "fool around;" that they can get help when they need it; and that this is a teacher who "teaches you a lot."

Commentary

There is nothing in the student interview data that is discrepant with parent and teacher reports with regard to teacher attitudes toward students

and a strong and evident focus on academic achievement. The only discrepancy noted pertains to the young man who lives with his grandmother. He admits that sometimes he gets frustrated "like (when) I know what it is, but she keeps trying to explain it to me" or "like when my grandpa starts explaining it and I'm getting all confused." Interestingly, and unpredictably given the grandmother's commentary, when this young fellow is asked: "Do you and your grandparents work well together?" he replies, "yeah, I'd say so."

As reported earlier, both teacher and parent data indicate that Mr. Abrams encourages students to view their parents as a resource. The message is conveyed in the student data as well by the reputedly recalcitrant student who reports that in addition to Mr. Abrams making himself available to students, "my teacher says . . . if you need help, . . . get help from your parents."

Mr. Ashdown: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Ashdown is a first-year teacher. He is working with "a split class" in which there is "an incredible range of abilities—from very low achievers to very high." He considers Avondale School to be a "great place to teach" and "feel(s) lucky to be in a school like this—(working with) professionals that are willing to help (his) development" and who are "united in that they want the best for their students and are willing to work really hard."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Mr. Ashdown does not have a great deal to say about parent involvement. He reports, however, that he is "really interested to know how (he) can use parents." Speaking from the perspective of a first year teacher, he comments that "it's fine to have a philosophy," but what he really needs are "strategies."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Mr. Ashdown reports that although he has not "turned a parent away from (his) door," he has not openly invited parents into the classroom. He explains: "I am still working to establish my own classroom atmosphere."

He has attempted, however, to establish some contact with parents. He has, for instance, talked to parents of a "few students that need extra help . . . so that they will understand what the child should be doing." He has phoned parents "in regard to discipline or a student not doing homework." And he has used the homework book, albeit not universally. This strategy is used with selected students who need to be closely monitored.

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Mr. Ashdown mentions students only when he is explicitly asked to comment on the extent to which they demonstrate responsibility to school work or his ability to reach every student. The only exception to this observation is when he discusses teacher collegiality. In this context he reports that the teachers at Avondale School "want the best for their students." Because students are so seldom mentioned, it is not possible to form a picture of Mr. Ashdown's attitude toward those he teaches.

Student Responsibility

Although Mr. Ashdown has not been in the classroom long, he nonetheless has formed opinions regarding student responsibility. On the one hand, he comments: "I don't think they are motivated enough;" and on the other, he believes that "it is a big job to ask students to take that kind of responsibility"—that is to say, responsibility for their own education.

Teacher Efficacy

Mr. Ashdown is asked if he is reaching every student. He replies: "No." Does he worry about whether he is reaching all this students? "Yes, very strongly." He is concerned that "sometimes (he) look(s) around the classroom and see(s) kids that are not focusing on what (he is) trying to tell them." He is concerned, too, about the "high achievers" who "come to (him) with concern(s) about not enough work, not learning enough."

With regard to involving parents, Mr. Ashdown admits that he has done little to encourage parent activity and admits to not being sure how he "could use them to the fullest advantage." He explains: "There are just so many things to address . . . I am still working on curriculum and discipline."

Commentary

Unfortunately, Mr. Ashdown was not available for a second interview. Therefore, Time 1/Time 2 comparisons were not possible.

While evidently feeling in survival mode, Mr. Ashdown does not project a sense of hopelessness. He "never feels isolated" and does not feel awkward about asking for help and advice. He speaks in terms of his "development" as a teacher and thereby gives the impression that teaching is a profession into which he will grow over time.

It is interesting to note how little students enter the conversation. Except when explicitly asked to comment on student responsibility or his ability to reach every student, students simply are not mentioned.

Mr. Ashdown: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Each of the three sets of parents interviewed has a son in Mr. Ashdown's classroom. All report feeling welcome in the school. However, one parent, a former teacher, admits to finding schools "intimidating." "It's still there with me," he says, "even though I have been in the system." He is not able to explain these feelings, except to say that "having left the profession, I might have taken away some wrong impressions."

His wife is "sure that there are lots who feel intimidated and figure that whatever the teacher does is right." These words, however, do not reflect her own attitudes or behaviours with regard to the school. She is comfortable there and does not hesitate to approach the school to discuss her concerns. She comments: "I always keep in touch with the teachers every year. I make myself known at the beginning that, you know, I want to know what's going on. No matter what: positive, negative. I just want to be in touch."

Parent-student working relationships among the three families are mixed. When asked if she enjoys working with her son, Mother A replies: "Sometimes yes. Sometimes no. If he's co-operative, more so." "We get into conflicts because of the length of time that I have been out of school and they are trying to do things in a new way now. And so with my way, I come up with the right answer in most instances, but not all instances. When I come at it, I guess backwards as far as he is concerned, we get into conflict." On these occasions, her son informs her that "that's not the way my teacher tells me to do it."

Mother B also talks of strained relationships when it comes to helping with homework, particularly math, which, for this mother, as for so many others, is "not at all" the "favourite subject." Homework difficulties, however, are not limited to math. They appear as well in language arts. "I find it frustrating," she says, "because boys are not into proofreading things. He figures that it's written and that's how it should be accepted even if it's spelled wrong." Though she speaks of problem areas, she also mentions that her son does like going to the library and "likes (her) to come with him."

Parents C enjoy working with their child but report that their son is often reluctant to show them his homework. "Sometimes he will hide his work. We will say, well, can we see your homework that you have tonight? He gets very upset and won't show it to us." The father "sort of check(s) on it anyway." He explains: "I feel I'm his parent and I have a right to see what he is doing in school." These parents report that their son "never used to do that" and question if this change "might be part of his adolescence" and in part because "he is worried that we are going to criticize what he has done." The father comments: "I guess I expect too much."

Teacher Regard for Students

Parent reports do not suggest a positive teacher-student relationship. Family A has a son whom the mother describes as sensitive and who is often victimized by his peers. The parents are asked if teachers, in general,

attempt to learn about such concerns. They reply: "Some yes and some no. Not particularly in this case. Not for (our son)." At the end of the year, the report is no more positive. The mother believes that Mr. Ashdown has been frustrated with her son and has let this show. She believes, too, that the teacher has now realized that "by treating (her son) in a frustrated manner, . . . the result is that (her son) is more frustrated" himself.

Mother B expresses no particular concerns and empathisizes with teachers who work at this grade level. "If every child is going through this (referring to adolescent changes in moods and behaviour), he must have, you know, to think up some ways to handle all these little idiosyncrasies."

Parents C, however, are less inclined to be sympathetic and are concerned about the nature of the student-teacher relationship. Their impression is that Mr. Ashdown has "guidelines" of what constitutes "a perfect student." In their opinion, the teacher is "basically . . . telling me my kid certainly doesn't meet that criteria." The mother adds: "My son knows too." The father agrees: "Oh, (my son) feels it."

These parents are not suggesting that "it should be necessary for (Mr. Ashdown) to know when it's time to click in with us—all 27 or 30 pairs of parents or single parents or whatever he's got." But, the father comments: "I would rather that he know when it's time to click in with (our son) and let me know that, you know, here's a note to your parents telling you how well you did today."

Parents C acknowledge that their son, whose "level of maturity is probably not as high as half his friends . . . does certain things. He behaves inappropriately. I know that, but I think there's ways of the teacher gaining his respect." "Every discipline method that has been tried with (our son) has been negative. Every one. There's been nothing to build his confidence or build his self-esteem. It's just been a total tear down . . . and I don't want to see his spirit broken."

When asked if the teacher respects his students, Parents A, in spite of the concerns noted above, respond positively. By way of evidence they comment: "Anytime we have been around him, he's always—even though he might have had a bad day—he will still greet him with a smile." The father notes as well that "I've taken him back to get books after supper . . . and the teacher will be sitting there talking to someone else and I'll say, 'Can I come in and get such and such?' By all means. Go and get it.' 6:30 at night!" His wife relates another incident that suggests to her that the teacher does respect her son. "He kicked his ball up on the roof and he tells us this after supper. So we go down to see it and the teacher went for the janitor and asked him to get it."

When asked if Mr. Ashdown respects students in general, Mother B states: "Yes, I think so." She bases her opinion on information she gathered from her son. "From the way I hear it, he's diplomatic when he handles situations."

At the beginning of the year, Parents C are somewhat ambivalent when asked if the teacher respects his students. "I don't know, it is hard to tell," the mother replies. On the positive side, "Mr. Ashdown is constantly telling me he is bright and he likes him and he doesn't hold any grudges." But, she questions, "I don't know if that is respect." On the other hand, "he nails him for every little thing." Parents C describe the teacher as "tough." However, despite their other concerns, they do not think that he is "sarcastic with the children" or that he has a "negative approach."

At the end of the year, Parents C demonstrate no ambivalence in their response to the question: "Does your child's teacher respect him?" "No, I don't think he does," says the mother. The father agrees: "No, I don't think he does. I don't think he respects him." The father explains: "The subject came up that this teacher made the statement that he had only three or four kids that were absolutely not to be believed about anything ever in the school and he was talking about how he keeps them after school. He keeps the entire class in to punish the class for a certain number of minutes . . . You know, I'm listening to this and then he made the statement about there's

only three or four in the class that—like I got the impression (that he has) his guidelines of what is a perfect student. So, you know, basically he's telling me my kid certainly doesn't meet that criteria."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

None of the sons is described as being particularly enthusiastic about school. Mother A says "I don't think he dislikes school. He would just like to not have to go or to go alternate weeks or something." "He was cheering the teachers' strike," she says. "Does that tell you anything?" Things do not get any better during the year. During the second interview, the father of this young man states: "He would rather be home—to put it mildly."

At the beginning of the year, Mother B "think(s) he likes it." But by the end of the year, the perception has changed. "He liked it until half way through this year," she says. Now "things are changing—attitude." She attributes this to age. "He's just twelve years old going on fifteen." In spite of this, she reports that her son "handles things (schoolwork) pretty well. Like I say, he still needs parental guidance in some things. He is not through it yet in his thinking, you know." But "he knows he has deadlines, and he knows he has to accomplish his task for that time - so he knows it, and he knows his responsibility is to his teacher."

Parents C have noticed a change in their son as well this year. He "generally likes school," but "he's not happy this year." "This is the first year he has probably had a negative attitude." The mother explains that her son "was getting tick marks and detentions all of the time . . . I realize that grade seven is a tough year. They do get into trouble. But I was worried about his negativeness about school this year, which he never had before." "He says that he hates the teacher."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Parents B view Mr. Ashdown as "very nice," and "really receptive." Parents A describe him as "very friendly" and "quite open . . . of what he's trying to

do and what he wants us to assist with." Both parents believe that Mr. Ashdown views them as partners in the education of the child. "He is very good that way," Parent A comments. Parents C also describe Mr. Ashdown as "very friendly," however, as noted below, the relationship is not without its problems.

Apart from the observation that Mr. Ashdown expects parents to monitor homework and that he will respond to parent-initiated homework queries, the relationship focuses primarily on "behavioural" rather than "academic" issues. This sentiment is reflected in the response Father C provides to the question: "Does Mr. Ashdown consider you a partner or team member in (your son's) education?" Father C replies: "Emotionally, I think he does. Academically, he's not prepared to accept us too much, I don't think."

Mother C comments that Mr. Ashdown "makes me feel welcome to come in to talk to him," and she provides an example of one such conversation. "I went to see him the other day and I think he is quite new. And I was making a few suggestions—that he might try a more positive approach with my son—but in a very tactful way and he seemed to be quite responsive to it and he thanked me for coming." He "told me that he was glad that I came to see him about certain things that were going on in the school."

And yet Mother C describes her relationship with Mr. Ashdown as "uncomfortable." She explains: "I feel comfortable talking to him, but I don't feel comfortable in how I feel about his, the way he handles the situations that happen. So that kind of puts a damper on how I feel there. Generally, when I go in there, I feel angry, but I don't want to come across in that way, so I do calm down."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

With regard to parent involvement in the classroom, parents report that they are not invited into the classroom for instructional or observational

purposes. Mother C is of the opinion that "given some experience over time that maybe he might be receptive to that idea."

Mr. Ashdown, however, does maintain contact with parents either by phone or through written communication. Typically, the purpose of the phone call is to convey some behavioural or disciplinary concern. It is "regarding some D T thing," says Parent A. This reflects Parents C's experience as well. We are called "if (our son) has been a disciplinary problem in class and he wants our support in encouraging his form of discipline." The father adds: "We've never had a call when things have gone well in school." Written home-school communication has a similar focus—they are about "some behavioural thing . . . some disciplinary problem."

Based on the information Parent C provides, it would appear that home-school communications do not go beyond the disciplinary. This father comments: "I'm quite concerned that they haven't really started studying any of the Social Sciences. There are things that I don't know what is going on in the classroom. I wish there was really more . . . into notifying parents as to what is expected." Father C is so concerned about this that he says: "I'm going to try . . . next year to have a copy, an absolute copy of the school curriculum for every grade now on through."

Contrary to Parent C's concern, Parent A reports that Mr. Ashdown "will give you information which says he (her son) has done better in this area than in another. So you understand a bit of how to speak." The question she does not speak to, however, is how or when this kind of information is communicated—is it transmitted to all homes through regular home-school communications or by way of corridor conversations with parents who happen to be in the school? On the basis of the information provided, it appears that the only routine way that parents are informed of classroom learning activities is through Mr. Ashdown's practice of sending home "things that need to be signed for—assignments that he knows we have to sign them so we're going to know what it looks like."

Though no parent mentions that Mr. Ashdown has advised students to seek assistance from their parents, Student B reports that "my teacher says if you're really having trouble, sometime he'll give advice to say, maybe you should ask your parents to help you in this certain subject."

Commentary

Parents are very aware that Mr. Ashdown is a new and "extremely inexperienced" teacher who "is still learning" (Parent C), and they are sympathetic with the difficulties they imagine or know from experience this entails. They also note the long hours he puts in. This is looked upon as dedication by some (Parents A) and lack of organization by others (Parent C). It is apparent that in this classroom the parent-teacher relationship focuses on behavioural and disciplinary issues rather than on instructional concerns. This has not escaped parent observation and although one parent feels that she receives the information she needs to monitor student progress, there are clear indications from Family C that more curricular knowledge should be transmitted to the home.

Mr. Ashdown: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Student A describes the classroom as quiet but uninteresting because "it doesn't have enough colour, no art." Student B sees it as "a mess" sometimes and describes student behaviours that make it difficult to work. He talks about his friend who sits "by these two kids and one of them, they always make fun of him because he likes to read much." He goes on to say: "the other kid right beside him, like, when he's trying to do a good copy he'll try to elbow him so he'll just scribble all over the page."

The only references to learning are made by Student B, who explains that in the school overall "the teachers . . . cover pretty well everything." More specifically and with regard to his own classroom, he reports that

"P.E. and Art are exciting and math, and socials, science, and reading, are boring." Student C concurs with this assessment with regard to math.

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Consistent with the parent reports, Student B explains "I'm not a person who's a fanatic about school." He continues: "I don't really talk to (my parents) about school. Actually, I barely talk to them about school because they don't ask and I don't feel it's important"—this from the same young man who reports that: "after school I usually call (my mother) to talk about my day;" and who speaks of talking with his dad "about some of the projects" that are done in class and "about some of the stuff that we've learned."

Student C mirrors his parents interpretation of his attitude toward Mr. Ashdown. He states: "I don't like my teacher. He has no sense of humour." He goes on to say: "I wish I had the other teacher because she is nicer and the other is grouchy." Student C has communicated his dissatisfactions to Mr. Ashdown. He told him that he "wanted to go to a different school and have a different teacher." After the fact, he says: "I was going to say sorry, "but it was just so hard to say that. But I really felt sorry."

Contrary to the negative comments that other students make, Student B provides a different perspective on student-teacher relationships. He notes that in the classroom "we have quite a bit of discussion. If we want something changed, we go into about an hour discussion about this . . . we will try different things that will help change."

Count for Something

All students feel that they "count for something in their classroom and their school. For Student A it is just a general feeling; for Student B it is a matter of having "something to do with what it would be like. Like, we don't want to do something that is straight from the textbook. We'd like to have a choice to see if we can make it more enjoyable than just straight boring. . . .

And I think we have that choice;" for Student C, it is the perception that the teacher likes him "even though I get detentions" and that the teacher has commented that "I'm a smart kid, I just fool around too much." "Just by teaching us," causes Student C to believe that he and his classmates count for something in the classroom.

Ms. Avril: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Ms. Avril is an experienced teacher who is new to Avondale School. The school is described as a place where "everybody seems happy" and where the staff has a "positive feeling." "We are always trying to figure out different things" here, she says. "The plan is always to give in-service." Ms. Avril "love(s) this school." She "love(s) to come to work every day . . . and is here at seven fifteen in the morning."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Ms. Avril has had some difficult experiences with parents. Nonetheless, at the beginning of the year she comments: "If I see them (parents) in the hallway, I stop and have a little chat. . . . If the opportunity is there to speak to them, I'll take it." In the spring, however, her words convey an ambivalence toward parents. "I guess I have no problems with any of them (parents) . . . If they phone me, I return their calls." Her language conveys an ambivalence as well when she describes her reaction to parents who call to explain that they were unable to help with a homework assignment. She describes parents as going "through the big spiel about how they don't understand the math and all this. And I'm like well, that's fine, so gee."

In sum, Ms. Avril considers herself involved in a "professional" relationship with parents. "I'm not friends with any of them. I'm not really friends with any of them. I'm polite and courteous and if they have questions, I answer them. And if I have something to say, I say it in a real polite manner."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

The tentativeness in attitudes discussed above is reflected in Ms. Avril's comments about parent involvement practices. "Well," she says, "I guess there always could be more contact with parents. But when do you find the time, right?"

Although Ms. Avril has not implemented a comprehensive parent-involvement program, she has found time to liaise with parents in the following three ways: through the use of homework books, which she uses only with those students who need to develop a more responsible approach to schoolwork; by calling parents "for missed homework assignments" or when "a student is having a weird day;" and three, by assigning a "science project (for which there is) an information package that goes home (that the parents) read and sign."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Ms. Avril identifies a number of opportunities made available to students to determine what they will study and how they will approach the material to be learned. This information, however, is filtered through her response to a question regarding the extent to which students have a choice in selecting learning activities. "They do and they don't," she says. "Lots of times they think they have choices and they don't." She then describes a learning activity to which students initially had a negative response. It is in this context that Ms. Avril describes herself as "good at motivating kids" and indicates that by the end of the lead-in activity students "believed that they had that choice (to become involved)" in that particular activity. In fact, from the teacher's perspective, choice was not an issue.

Student Responsibility

Ms. Avril reports that seventy per cent of her students "never miss a homework assignment." She notes, however, that "some of my guys have problems." The use of homework books and her comment that "slowly we want to get away from that and have them take more responsibility for it (their schoolwork)" suggests two things: one, that students are capable of acquiring a responsible approach to their education; and two, that teachers have a responsibility to nurture student responsibility where it is found wanting. At the end of the year, while acknowledging that some students

continue to be very responsible, Ms. Avril questions whether some students will "ever, ever, ever be able to" take responsibility for their schoolwork or their behaviour.

Teacher Efficacy

Ms. Avril, who describes herself as a "resourceful person," reports feeling less concerned this year than last with her ability to reach all her students. The previous year was particularly difficult and caused her stress and headaches for the first time in her life. This year, however, she "love(s) coming to work every day" and feels positive about her ability to "motivate kids to do things."

Although there are times when she questions whether she is doing her best, she reports feeling sufficiently comfortable in her professional role to ask other teachers for assistance. She speaks, as well, of "feeling a responsibility to help out" a staff member who is a first year teacher. For Ms. Avril to act on this sense of responsibility suggests that she believes she has something of value to offer her new colleague.

With regard to her relationship with parents, Ms. Avril reports at the beginning of the year that, "with one exception," it is "great." She admits to feeling "pretty good" when "one of the girls wrote in her journal that her mum and dad think they can tell me anything."

At the end of year, however, when she is asked to describe the relationship between teachers and parents, she responds first with laughter, then with the statement: "I dunno." She does provide evidence, however, that some parents were concerned that she "wasn't covering every fact in the social studies textbook" and that there was real concern that "the child wasn't going to get all the facts he needed to know in his head." Her explanation that "process was much more important that content . . . didn't sink in" with the parents.

Commentary

On the basis of the information provided, there appear to be two changes between Time 1 and Time 2: one, the parent-teacher relationship seems less secure at the end of the year than at the beginning; and two, there appears to be less optimism regarding her ability to positively effect student responsibility in those who show a weakness in this area.

With regard to Ms. Avril's attitude toward parent involvement, it is interesting to focus on her comment that parents go "through the big spiel about how they don't understand the math and all this." The word "spiel" typically does not connote respect when used in this context. Its use, therefore, calls into question this teacher's underlying attitude toward the persons or the group of persons to whom this word is applied.

Ms. Avril's comments also reveal an ambiguity in attitude towards students. The fact that she is able to create an interest in a topic where none had previously existed is to her credit and speaks well of her competence as a teacher. What is problematic, however, is the sense of deception that filters through this commentary and the idea that in some way she has outsmarted the children in her classroom. Deception is not a characteristic of a mutually respectful relationship and because of this one questions the extent to which its use reveals a negative undercurrent in this teacher's relationship with her students.

To compare Ms. Avril's comments regarding student responsibility and those that speak of student choice, or lack thereof, is to question which reveals more accurately the underlying attitude toward students? With this question in mind, it is interesting to examine her reaction to children who come to school early in the morning to do homework that was not completed the previous evening. Ms. Avril's response to her students is: "Well, you're lucky I'm here at seven o'clock this morning. Otherwise you wouldn't get in. Why didn't you do it last night? Well, you know this and that happened or I just decided I'd like to come in and do it in the morning. That's the attitudes they're taking right now. I don't know how I'm liking it."

The overall impression is that Ms. Avril is a teacher with mixed feelings about her professional competence. This comes through in the information that is reported here. It comes through, as well, in the number of times that laughter or an inability to respond is the reaction to the question posed.

Ms. Avril: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Two mothers, each with a son in Ms. Avril's classroom, were interviewed. Both report feeling welcome in the classroom and in the school itself. Mother A, who is deeply immersed in a newly-established family business, has little time to become involved with in-school activities. At-home support is difficult as well given the nature of the student-parent working relationship. She explains that her son "gets really frustrated and then I get frustrated because I don't understand how I am supposed to teach it and how to do it. . . . Then we end up arguing or whatever and he gets uptight. . . . It is really hard sometimes. You know, I guess he doesn't explain himself very well to me and I don't explain myself very well to him, I guess. You know, nobody's fault. It is just the way it works out." "I am in the dark about what's going on and what he is supposed to be doing," which makes it "frustrating when I try to help him."

Mother B, a teacher herself, enjoys helping her son but admits that he "is quite independent about his learning and he prefers to do his homework and hand it in without involving us." The only negative comment she makes is that "we sort of continually have to natter away . . . can we see your work and what you're doing and can we help." Although this young man prefers to work independently, he "will come home and discuss various things that he is doing. You know, things that he has done and what he's studying in social studies and the book that he just finished reading"—behaviours that suggest to the mother that her son is "fairly interested" in what is happening at school.

Each parent reports that her son has a positive attitude toward school. Mother B's son used to comment that "he'd rather be fishing," but he nonetheless "goes willingly. He never complains." She also comments that his attitude toward school "is more positive this year than it has been in other years." Mother A reports that she is "happy to say . . . he is very happy in school." This is a different from "a couple of years ago" when "it was a real battle to get him to school. There was tears and crying. He didn't like the teacher and the teacher didn't like him. . . . It was a nightmare." This year, "he is just doing excellent. It is so nice to see him with a smile."

Teacher Regard for Students

Each parent believes that Ms. Avril respects her child. For Mother A, respect is demonstrated by the way "she takes him seriously in whatever little subject that is very serious to him. . . . I think that is very important" to my son. As well, "she seems to really emphasize the way he helps other kids. He is always ready to . . . help somebody and she was quite impressed by that. So I assume that is some kind of respect, too." This mother notes, as well, that Ms. Avril "wants to have a good year with him. She really likes him, so I think she is willing . . . to help him if he needs the help."

Mother B considers Ms. Avril to be "a very caring person" who "looks at the children as individuals." "She tries to find out about them. What they like to do. What they are interested in doing." At the end of the year, this parent mentions that "when we talk, she always is able to give her small examples of how well (her son) did on this, or how he was enjoying this, or he seemed really involved in this, and she seemed to really respect him as an individual—respect his interests and his strengths."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

In Mother A's opinion, her son "must really be comfortable with (Ms. Avril)," because "he is not scared of asking for something that he doesn't understand, which is good because he never used to do that." She reports that her son "is happy to go to school," "he looks forward to going to

school," and "always says nice things about her." These observations and his comments, "I like my teacher" and "I had a good day today," lead her to believe that the relationship between student and teacher is positive. She reports as well that "he seems to want to get more involved in school things, too. This year, I find that's one thing that's changed. He feels really proud of it."

For Mother B, the fact that her son "has told us things and he often relates stories or information that his teacher has told the class and obviously he is really quite enjoying the information" suggests to her, too, that the student-teacher relationship is positive.

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Mother A speaks of feeling "really good after the meeting with (Ms. Avril) about (her son). I really did." These good feelings are a product of Ms. Avril's regard for her son whom she described to the parent as "very responsible and . . . respecting of school things and his peers."

Despite the good feelings, this mother describes the relationship between parents and teachers in general as "poor" but places responsibility for this solely with herself. "I haven't made the effort to get in touch with the teachers. Again, it's because of work, you know, not that I'm not interested. It's just that. I don't blame the teacher for it. I feel that it's my responsibility." She believes that Ms. Avril would consider the relationship "poor" as well, once again because she (the mother) has "not made the effort to get in touch with her." "She probably thinks that I am free to call her and like it's up to me to go to her and make the move, I guess." This comment is not delivered as a complaint. It is simply the parent's observation of the way things are—with no suggestion that things should necessarily be any different. She does say: "I'm sure we could talk on the phone. She could phone me at work, I suppose," but adds "I don't expect her to do that. She has had her day." "I am never home until six or six thirty and I mean she's finished school at you know, so I don't know how we could connect."

When asked if she thinks the teacher considers her to be a partner in her child's education, she replies: "I don't know . . . she has only seen me once, so it is no good to make that assumption." Mother B is also unable to provide a definite answer. "That's a hard one," she replies.

Mother B reports more communication with Ms. Avril, albeit parent-initiated. It is Mother B's opinion that Ms. Avril "has been really quite open and willing to communicate. . . . We've discussed homework for him. We've discussed different sorts of activities (her son) is involved in." She also "seems open to comments or open to suggestions or willing to investigate. Whenever I've talked to her she's 'oh yes, I'll get right on that' or 'yes, I'll do that' or 'yes, I'll . . .' "

Another indication of the positive rapport between parent and teacher is Mother B's comments regarding the parent-teacher conference, which she described as "very positive." It was one where "both of us (were) talking and both of us sharing information," unlike other conferences that were more teacher-centred, with the teacher rather than the parent providing perspectives on the child's development.

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Mother A reports that Ms. Avril requested that the mother call should her son have "a problem or if . . . he had . . . any complaints about her (Ms. Avril)—that he didn't feel comfortable with her." They, then, "could get together and talk." The mother was also advised to "phone her (Ms. Avril) at the school" if she "was unsure of anything. . . . I mean she made that clear." The only other reference to parent involvement strategies pertains to information regarding "a big Chinese unit," about which parents "received information." The nature of that information was not revealed.

Commentary

The positive regard for this teacher appears, for the most part, to be based on relational aspects of the student-teacher and parent-teacher connection.

Obviously something good is happening in this classroom because both parents perceive their sons to be more interested in and comfortable with school. Interestingly, with very few exceptions, reference is seldom made to student responsibility or student learning. In fact, when parents do express concerns it is with regard to these issues. One parent feels "in the dark" and comments on how this negatively affects her ability to help her son in the home; another speaks of parents not really knowing what is happening. This parent is concerned as well about the lack of homework. At this point it is worth noting that Ms. Avril herself seldom speaks specifically of learning activities and when she does, the reference is negative. I am referring to her comment that she "had some parents really concerned that I wasn't covering every fact in the social studies textbook" and that her attempts to explain to them that "process was much important than the content . . . didn't sink in." Telling as well are her responses to the question: "In what ways can teachers promote parent involvement?" With the exception of the suggestion that when parents are picking up their children, they be invited into the classroom "to have a look to see what we do," all other responses have a non-instructional focus: greet parents in the hallway; always be positive, cheerful, and happy; and invite parents to participate or attend special events. These suggestions support the observation that positive parent evaluations of Ms. Avril are a consequence of relational, rather than instructional, liaisons with parents.

Obviously, one way for teachers and such parents to remain in touch is for the teacher to contact parents in the evening. Alternatively, parents can be advised of the teacher's home number and the hours during which she or he would be willing to accept calls. This is not a practice that Ms. Avril has adopted. Her approach to telephone contact, as noted earlier, is "if they phone me, I return their calls." With this in mind, Mother A is probably quite right in her assessment that Ms. Avril expects parents to take the initiative. While the homework issue has been addressed directly with the teacher, these parents discuss their concerns in very general terms. They are not perceived to be criticisms of this particular teacher and, in fact,

explanations (excuses?) are made that favour the teacher—lack of parental initiative in the case of one parent; lack of teacher time in the other.

The lack of teacher parent involvement strategies revealed through an examination of the parent interviews is not surprising and is congruent with the information Ms. Avril volunteered. Neither is it surprising, therefore, to hear parents speak of feeling "in the dark" and "not really knowing what is going on." It is not that Ms. Avril is unaware of the kind of help that some parents need. She is. She believes that "even if their kids are having problems at home and they (the parents) are willing to help, often they don't feel comfortable helping because they don't . . . they're afraid to or they don't know how to." This perception speaks directly to the concerns Mother A raises. Interestingly, in this classroom, although the teacher is aware of this problem, nothing is done to alleviate it.

Ms. Avril: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Both boys comment positively on the learning that occurs in this classroom: one indicates that he is "learning more and getting on with (his) schoolwork;" the other reports that he feels "a little smarter because (he has) learned new things."

This learning occurs in a classroom that one student describes as "pretty much . . . a good place to learn." On the positive side, he sees the teacher as there to help the students. If they are having problems, "we'd just put our hand up and she'd come over to us and explain it." He also comments on Ms. Avril's encouraging words. Correct responses are greeted with the comment "good job." The teacher response to students who answer questions incorrectly is "maybe next time." This student is also pleased with "the way (Ms. Avril) does things, . . . she tries to make them as fun as possible so we'll get into them" and "want to do more." On the negative side, this young man—who, as stated earlier, is "learning more and

getting on with (his) schoolwork"—admits that "sometimes it's hard because some of the kids in my class are pretty rowdy."

The other student appears equally satisfied with the classroom learning environment. He views the classroom as "a good place." He likes "the way (Ms. Avril) gives us plenty of time to do our work" and considers her a "nice teacher." When asked "What is nice about her?" he replies: "She doesn't give a whole lot of homework."

Student-Teacher Relationship

The first young man has one further concern and that has to do with Ms. Avril's disciplinary procedures. He notes that "if it is the first person who gets in trouble that day, it is not really that bad. But after she kind of gets frustrated and then after that kid it doesn't help any other kids." When asked if he had discussed this concern with his teacher, he answers "no." He was then asked "why not?" "Because," he explains, "she might disagree with me." And what would happen if she did, he is asked? "I'm not sure . . . and that is why I wouldn't tell her."

Commentary

The student comment that his teacher "tries to make (classroom learning activities) as fun as possible so we'll get into them" and "want to do more" substantiates Ms. Avril's self-assessment that she is good at motivating students and encouraging interest where none might have previously existed. Less reassuring, from an instructional point of view, is the student comment that Ms. Avril is "nice" because "she doesn't give a whole lot of homework"—this comes from the young man whose parents are concerned about the lack of homework. On this matter, student and parent obviously hold different opinions.

There is nothing in the student interviews that is at odds with the parents' assessment of the teacher-student interactions. With regard to parent involvement, it is interesting to note that these students are unsure

of their teacher's stance on parents helping students with homework. The son of Mother A indicates that he does not know what his teacher's expectations are in this regard, but notes that his parents help him anyway. Once again, the only discrepancies that can be identified between parent and student data pertain to parent-student working relationships: in one case, the differing views of the importance and/or desirability of homework; in the other, a less harsh interpretation on the part of the student of the working relationship he shares with his family. He acknowledges that there are difficulties. "Well," he says, "sometimes mom and dad don't understand because schoolwork's moved up so much from when they've been in school." "But, they do their best."

Ms. Billings: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Ms. Billings is an experienced teacher who is new to Brookfield School. In the recent past, she taught in the northern part of the province. Although she finds Brookfield a "good" and "interesting" place to teach, it is not as interesting as her experience in the North. There, she says, because of the large number of novice teachers who come to the North in the early part of their careers, there is "a lot of experimenting" and "a lot more of sharing going on." There, she says, she was always "inundated with ideas."

Unlike her colleague, Mr. Brooks, who feels that "there is a general consensus that what we are working towards is worthwhile," it is Ms. Billings' observation that as a staff "we don't sit down and have the common goals . . ., I mean there are some, but I don't see that striving that we had (at the previous school) . . . at the intermediate (level in this school)." However, with regard to how students are to be treated, there is "good consistency on expectations," and those expectations are "fairly clearly laid out."

Ms. Billings notes there is a "strong core of really good, solid, supporting parents" volunteering at the school level. However, apart from Mr. Simpson, who referred to a history of antagonistic parent-teacher relationships, Ms. Billings is the only teacher who reports having heard parents express "some very strong feelings against the school."

The negative comments she makes at the beginning of the year regarding parent attitudes toward the school and teacher cohesiveness are not repeated at the end of the year. By the spring Ms. Billings' perceptions have shifted. She reports then that: "We have a really good staff here who care about their students, and I think parents pick up on that even if they disagree sometimes with what goes on."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Ms. Billings observes that the school is attracting more and more children from "a whole string of lower income apartments plus a lower cost housing project." "Schools," she says, "have to work a whole lot harder to get those parents involved" and must use "different ways rather than the traditional" to reach the parents of these children. She admits, however, that she is "not sure what they are." She is also of the opinion that "it is an unreal expectation to expect . . . when the parents themselves only have a grade eight education, to expect them to be assisting."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Ms. Billings has adopted two approaches to maintaining contact with parents: one, the homework book, which she signs "to ensure that they've copied it (the homework) down correctly and (which is) signed by their parents to say that the work is completed;" and two, telephone calls. "I'll often make one (telephone call)," she explains, and if I find that the parents respond positively, and I can feel that there is going to be some backing, then I will phone them quite frequently."

At the end of the year she comments that she "has not been good at doing the 'good news' calls or the 'do you have any concerns' calls." Most of her telephone contacts have been limited to talking "with a lot of parents about difficulties their kids have." Next year, she remarks, "I have to set a schedule for myself. I keep saying . . . come the fall."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Ms. Billings seldom mentions students in either of the two interviews. Apart from the information that Ms. Billings is: one, concerned when she feels that she is not reaching a student; and two, makes herself available until 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon to students who may be having difficulty with their schoolwork, there is little else upon which to base a perception of

her attitude toward students—unless, of course, the lack of reference to students is itself telling.

Student Responsibility

Ms. Billings believes that some students can take responsibility for their education. "It's about a fifty/fifty split," she says. To encourage accountability she demands that homework be completed on time "unless there is an extremely good excuse." She explains that "in my class the kids know that if homework isn't completed, they are in the next night until it is."

Teacher Efficacy

At the beginning of the year, Ms. Billings comments: "If you want a really candid, honest answer, I know that I am not reaching all my students." How does she know this? "Just the way I have to pull teeth with some kids. Every so often the frustration or the unhappiness that shows with the kids . . . sometimes a little bit of parent feedback, but those are probably the main ways that . . ., and the guilt—when you know that he's a kinesthetic learner and you aren't a kinesthetic teacher."

This having been said, Ms. Billings realizes that sometimes a teacher gets through even in those cases where she feels she has failed. She speaks of "one of the most rewarding things that ever happened" in her teaching career. "Last year," she says, "I got a Christmas card from a little boy I taught that I never thought I would reach. And the Christmas card said 'you're the best teacher I ever had.' So maybe you do reach some kids in ways that you don't know you ever have."

With regard to her relationship with parents, Ms. Billings feels that over the year "it has been quite supportive. That is the feeling I have got—most are quite supportive. . . . I don't get a whole lot of anger." She does appear to be stymied, however, by the problem of how to encourage reluctant parents to become involved in their children's education. Reporting that she has helped parents help their children learn, she says, as do many

teachers, "but they (the parents) are the ones that show real interest in wanting to help their child and that is not always the child that is most in need of it. But then—I don't know—can you do it with the unwilling?"

Commentary

The most noticeable changes between Time 1 and Time 2 are Ms. Billings' perceptions of staff relations and parent attitudes toward the school—both are more positive at the end of the year. For the most part, however attitudes and practices regarding students, parents, and parent involvement remain constant. The exception would be an increased use of homework books and the "good news" telephone call.

With regard to Ms. Billings' question "can you do it with the unwilling," it is possible, given the neighbourhood in which she teaches, that at least some of the "unwilling" form part of that group that require "ways rather than the traditional" about which she is "not sure."

Ms. Billings: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

When asked if she feels welcome in her daughter's school, Mother A reports "no." "You just get a very cold feeling. . . . Maybe it's because . . . I have no use for the principal." "His attitude stinks, putting it in down to earth words." In this mother's opinion, the "principal and the teachers are against the kid . . . it doesn't matter what the kid says, the kid is wrong and that's wrong because the kids aren't always wrong. . . . I think the school's going to pot. And the sooner she's out of it, the happier I'll be." This mother believes that others share her concerns. "I don't care who you talk to. I'd be safe to say you could talk to any parent of any kid that goes to that school and they'll all tell you the same thing. It's been since they've changed principals . . . something's gone haywire. . . . The principal doesn't know whether he's up, down, sideways."

Unlike Mother A, Mother C feels welcome in the school and is of the opinion that teachers respond well to parental concerns. She comments that "if there are any problems and you talk to the teachers, you seem to get a good response." Mother C reports that her children really enjoy going to this school and prefer it to the one that is closer to them. "I've kept them there," she says, not only because the children like the school, but because the school "seem(s) to have a good program."

Teacher Regard for Students

When asked if Ms. Billings respects her daughter, Mother A responds: "No, I think she picks on her and don't ask me for a reason because I can't give you a reason. That's just the feeling I get. This mother is concerned, too, that Ms. Billings has "a real thing about keeping (her daughter) in" after school. Her concerns were magnified when she learned that after a call to the teacher to discuss this issue, Ms. Billings "went back to the classroom and apparently took it out on (her daughter)." While we cannot be certain "it happened that way, this is what we hear."

When asked to comment on student-teacher rapport, Mother A reports that Ms. Billings is "a pain in the butt" and that her "attitude stinks." In addition to the concerns noted above, Mother A comments that this teacher does not take individual learning differences into account. The teacher "expects the kids to pick it up when she says we're doing such and such and blah, blah and that's it and the kids should know. And I don't think that's right because every kid does not pick up the same as the next one."

Mother B's perception of the student-teacher relationship is far more positive, both at the beginning of the year and at the end. She believes that Ms. Billings respects her daughter and shows this by trying "to treat her as an individual" and by giving "her a fair amount of responsibility."

Like Mother B, Mother C believes that Ms. Billings respects her child. She bases this opinion on what she perceives to be fair treatment. She recounts an incident regarding a group project for which her daughter had

done "the majority of the work." The mother was pleased that Ms. Billings had noticed the imbalance in student responsibility and had graded the project accordingly. "It was kind of nice to see," she comments.

Contrary to Mother A's concerns, Father C's impression is that Ms. Billings is "willing to attribute individual attention to detail rather than just gloss over" things. In his opinion "not all teachers have the opportunity to do that because the classes are so large, budgets are cut and, you know, it's just a job now, it's not a love of vocation that it used to be."

At the end of the year, Family C has both positive and negative things to say regarding the student-teacher relationship. On the negative side, the mother speaks of a completed homework assignment that went astray. The daughter "had a project that she was to complete at the house—it was to read a book. I watched her draw and do all of the things. And she had to have it in at a certain time. She worked a couple of days on it and then she worked late into the evening to complete some of the drawings and she handed it in. Well, it disappeared. And the teacher gave her no mark. And I didn't know about that until the report cards were handed out. And I said: 'Well, you handed it in.' She goes: 'I know . . . I put in on the desk and it just disappeared and the teacher gave me a 'zero' for it.' And I thought that was really unfair. . . . She said she told the teacher that she handed it in and she goes: 'Well, I don't have it and so how could you have handed it in? She goes: 'Well, I did.' And it just disappeared."

In spite of this incident, the mother believes that Ms. Billings does respect her students, citing as evidence her perception that the teacher holds the students accountable for completion of assignments and in this way demonstrates concern for her students' preparedness for high school.

Student Regard for School and Teacher

In the early part of the year, Mother A reports that her daughter is "quite happy, content" with school. She bases this opinion on her belief that "if they don't like it, they're going to have something rotten to say, right? She never

does." There are, however, "specific times when . . . (her daughter) gets on these kicks . . . she doesn't understand why she has to go to school because she wants to be a truck driver when she gets older." "Anytime she had her choice, she'd be with him (her father, a truck driver). To her school is boring compared to going with him wherever he happens to be going."

At the end of the year, however, things have changed. In May the mother reports that "something is going to pot because now (her daughter) is finding excuses why she doesn't want to go to school and that's not (her daughter). Something is happening. I don't know whether it's up here on the teachers and principal level or whether it's something that's going on with the kids. I don't know."

She does mention, however, that her daughter gets "really frustrated because she doesn't understand" some of Ms. Billings' instructions, particularly with regard to math. The mother is unable to assist with homework because she does not understand the current approach to maths instruction. As a consequence, her daughter occasionally goes to school with her homework incomplete. The mother comments: "From what I gather then she gets chewed out from her teacher because she doesn't understand." The mother believes that there is "a slight personality clash" between the teacher and her daughter and is of the opinion that this teacher is determined to "come out ahead" of the child. "The kid's going to be wrong. Doesn't matter what she does, she's going to be wrong."

Parents B report that their daughter likes school but, at the beginning of the year, is "not really all that happy in her class." This does not reflect negatively on the teacher. The girl's unhappiness comes from being separated from her friends, who are in another classroom. At the end of the year, the regard for school continues to be positive, but, the mother notes: "I think she is bored this year."

Mother C describes her daughter as "a real charmer in school" and as a child about whom the teachers "usually . . . have no complaints." "She seems to have a good attitude," and although she did not want to change

schools this year, "she seems to be getting along just fine." This has not always been the case. There was one year when, from the parent perspective, the teacher was driving the students too hard. That year, this young girl would "scream in the car not to go" to school and on occasion would "refuse to go into school." I "had to bring her home," the father reports.

The end-of-the-year interview, however, provides different information. The Mother C speaks of too much homework. "There was one day she came home and she had at least five hours worth of homework . . . she had to start that right after school and it led into her evening and she really had no time for herself and she was really upset about it. . . . She was in tears and she didn't want to finish the homework . . . and that happened a number of times." Nonetheless, the mother believes that her daughter "seemed to do really well . . . She seemed to enjoy it . . . she seemed to be a lot more relaxed and at ease. . . . This year she is really relaxed—she has really enjoyed it."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Mother A does not like Ms. Billings. "I don't like her attitude," she comments. She believes that teachers should make an effort to contact parents when a child is having difficulty, either academically or emotionally. Based on Mother A's experience, this is not happening. Referring to the daughter's changed attitude toward school, the mother is asked if she, herself, has contacted the teacher to discuss this problem. She replies: "No, why should I have to? If she (the teacher) can't sense something's wrong when I sense it at home, shouldn't she be the one that's on the phone? This is what I think . . . that's the way I feel." "Maybe I'm coming across as a real bag, but if they (the teachers) are not willing to do it (work collaboratively with parents), why should the parents do it?"

Mother A, however, has initiated telephone contact on previous occasions, but she has not been pleased with the teacher's response. "I know the feeling I get. I can't explain it. It's a really strange feeling, like I

couldn't care less if I ever talked to her. That's the way she comes across on the phone. And I don't think that's right."

At the end of the year, having never met the teacher face to face, Mother A remarks: "I wouldn't know her (Ms. Billings), if I fell over her on the street." To this mother, the relationship between parents and teachers in general is a "big joke. . . . I don't think it's there. There's nothing there."

Mother B has a more positive reaction to Ms. Billings than Mother A and reports that she and the teacher "get along quite well." She feels "comfortable going down to the class and going into the class." She believes, however, that teachers in general should communicate "a little bit more and ask for help. There's no reason why they can't ask for help from the parents. . . . I realize it takes time, but probably not as much time in the long run as the extra help that they're having to give the kids."

Generally speaking, this mother believes that the relationship between teachers and parents is "kind of guarded . . . it's almost like there's a bit of friction between them, like they're afraid to say too much." She continues: "I think that sometimes they're a little bit afraid of parents. They don't really know what to expect from the parents, and I think that sometime they're kind of apprehensive about what that parent is thinking." This tension is exacerbated when parents feel, as does this mother, "leery of saying too much to the teacher for fear of having them come back on the child."

Speaking specifically of Ms. Billings, Mother B comments: "She strikes me as being a little bit apprehensive about what I think and yet there's no problem. I don't have any problem with her or anything." At the beginning of the year, Mother B attributes this apprehension, in part, to the fact that they have "only met a couple of times and it hasn't been long enough period to really get down to a comfortable relationship."

When Mother B is asked if she feels that her child's teacher sees her as a partner in her daughter's education, she first speaks of parent-teacher

relationships in general. "I've never felt that way," she comments. "I guess basically because there's no encouragement to help the kids from the school, basically from the teachers. Like, the schools are always looking for participation, not necessarily in the educational department, but you know, they like you to come in and help in the library and do all that sort of stuff, but as far as helping the individual child, they really don't seem to encourage that." In this mother's opinion, the relationship between teachers and parents "on the whole, is poor . . . especially with working parents."

Speaking specifically of Ms. Billings, Mother B responds: "I really don't know how she feels." She anticipates that Ms. Billings' answer would be: "I really don't think that there is a relationship there." The mother continues: "I don't know how she could say anything different, you know, there is just nothing there." She reports as well: "I really haven't had an awful lot of contact with the teacher this year."

Contrary to Mother A's perceptions, Mother C finds Ms. Billings "very receptive" and "very open." This mother reports that she "was able to talk to the teacher if there were any problems or to find out if she needed extra work or a hand in something." She felt confident "that when there were any concerns . . . the teacher would phone the house and I was able to talk to her that way." This having been said, it is interesting to note that there was no parent-teacher communication regarding two issues of concern that occurred during the year: one, excessive amounts of homework that reduced the child to tears; and two, a missing assignment.

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Through her negative responses to a number of questions regarding parent involvement strategies, Mother A indicates that there is no home-school communication except that which she and her husband initiate.

Mother B comments "that sometimes it's really difficult when you don't know what's going on, what their curriculum is . . . the things . . . they're learning and the way . . . they're learning." She adds: "I think if the

curriculum is known a little bit better, even just sending home letters . . . these are the types of questions that we want answered or whatever, I think that would make things a lot easier." Given these comments, it is assumed that Ms. Billings does not keep parents informed. It could be argued that parents could take the initiative, but because of past experiences, Mother B will not do so. She explains that it is "really difficult" to develop a collaborative relationship "without the teacher opening the door. . . . I've tried it before . . . Basically I have been told to 'butt out.' . . . So now if the teacher doesn't open the door, I'm not going to step in there and get my face slapped."

This opinion, which was stated at the beginning of the year, does not change throughout the year. The mother remarks late in the academic year that her daughter "hasn't been challenged the way that she should have been and obviously the teacher has seen things in her that she has picked up on her own"—thus the recommendation to the gifted program. "I would have liked to have known about that because I could have given her a lot more guidance at home." Mother B believes that teachers "should make an effort to contact the parents. Even if it were a class newsletter or something like that to let them know what was going on in the class and just to keep them more involved in what the kids are doing, what is happening."

Mother B provides another non-instance of teacher parent involvement strategies. She reports receiving information by mail, and not from the teacher, that her daughter had been recommended for the Gifted Education Program in high school. "I had no idea," she explains, "that came right out of the blue. . . . That is something that should have been brought to my attention—if she was doing that much over what was required of her."

Mother C's comments at the beginning of the year reveal a reactive approach to parent involvement. Ms. Billings indicated during a parent-teacher interview that "if there was any problems, to come in and talk to her . . . her door's open basically any time." "But there haven't been any problems to end up going there," the mother reports, "so I really haven't been to the classroom." At the end of the year, Mother C reports that there has been

little communication between parent and teacher since that initial meeting and there is no mention of any teacher-initiated parent involvement activity.

Ms. Billings: Student Perceptions

Class Learning Environment

Student A describes the learning environment of the classroom as "o.k." Student B, however, believes that things would be better if the teacher were to divide her time more evenly between the two grades that comprise the class (grades six and seven) so that "we'd each get taught." This young girl is concerned that she and her classmates are not afforded the same learning opportunities as are those grade sevens who are not in a split class. By way of example she reports that "they (the other grade seven class) studied Rome and Babylon, which we never studied. . . . At the beginning of the year, we did Japan. . . . The only reason . . . we . . . did it is because the grade sixes were also doing it and she (Ms. Billings) just changed it so that the grade sevens would be studying ancient Japan; . . . the grade sixes, . . . normal Japan. But a lot of that stuff we already knew." This student believes that Ms. Billings finds it necessary to spend more time with the grade sixes because there are "three times as many grade sixes" as grade sevens. However, she argues, "it's really important that grade sevens get a really good grade seven year because they have to have that education, that extra education to get into high school, to do good in high school, there's some things that we really need to know." Nonetheless, she remarks that the classroom "can be pretty exciting sometimes. . . . It's got a lot of different activities to do."

Student B confirms the perception that Ms. Billings does little, in a proactive way, to extend classroom learning into the home through parent involvement activities. She reports that her teacher "doesn't really work with our parents very much. She just kind of, like, oh, tell your parents

this, so we just go home. Like, she never calls us—she only calls . . . the bad people's parents," or as Student C observes, "when kids are misbehaving."

Student C's perception of teacher-initiated parent involvement is similar to her classmate's. Invitations to parents to become involved are extended indirectly and through the student. As Student C reports: "If we're having trouble in school, sometimes they ask us to ask our parents to help us—the teacher." The outcome, however, is not always successful, as is evident by Student C's comment that when her mother attempts to help, "sometimes . . . I don't understand a word she says." The reason, she explains, is that her mother "learned different" and that when it comes to explanations, she approaches a problem in "a different way than what the teacher does." The outcome is confusion.

A positive characteristic of this classroom is commented upon by both Students B and C. They mention the opportunity to work collaboratively with other students. "I like it (the classroom)," Student C comments, "because people help me and I help them." Community is important to this student and she comments favourably on its presence in the school overall. She likes the school and so do her parents "because people help and we do lots of stuff together, like the school, the whole school does stuff together." Student B remarks positively on this aspect of school life as well, speaking of the "family grouping" practice as "good."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

At the beginning of the year Student A reports that she was "not quite used to the teacher" and at the end of the year remarks that "it didn't get better not whatsoever" throughout the year. She accurately perceives her parent's dissatisfaction with the school, reporting that her "mum and dad really think our school has gone right down the tube." Like her parents, she attributes the decline to "a new principal—and my teacher as well." In this young girl's opinion, the home, not the school, is where learning takes place. My mother and father "help me learn more at home than my teacher

at school." She remarks: "I work better with my parents that I do with my teacher."

As noted above, Student B feels that the teacher could divide her time more evenly between the grade six and seven students in the class. However, she has not discussed this issue with Ms. Billings, nor would she. She explains: "I'm kind of scared. I don't think she'd get angry. I just don't have enough guts to really get up and say something like that: 'You don't give us enough time.' " Generally speaking, however, Student B is content with her school and believes her parents are as well. "They like how they teach us different—our teachers, like, when we have trouble, our teachers explain to us individually and help us."

Count for Something

At the beginning of the year, Student A does not feel that she "counts for something" at her school or in her classroom because she is teased and "called names every day." Late in the year, her feelings remain the same. "I would say the same thing as I said before about the school going right down the tube. I don't count because of the principal and the teachers."

Student B began the year feeling that students did not count for something, but her opinion changed as the year progressed. At the end of the year, she remarks: "Now I think we do" (count for something). She now believes that "if enough of us support an idea, then we can help make that idea come." "Yeah," she says, "I feel that we each—each and every one of us—count for things in the classroom." "Our teachers are very supportive of us." Speaking specifically of her relationship with her own teacher, she reports that Ms. Billings reacts favourably when she, the student, offers "a few ideas as to what I think and so on."

Student C also reports feeling that she "counts for something." Unlike Student B, who attributed these feelings to teacher behaviours, she feels it as a consequence of her ability to help other students in the classroom with their schoolwork.

Mr. Brooks: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Brooks is first-year teacher. The school to which he is assigned, Brookfield, has a "positive atmosphere—which isn't just in the classroom—it is in the whole school." He considers the staff "very cheerful" and "mutually supportive," and he believes that amongst them "there is a general consensus that what we are working towards is worthwhile."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

As a beginning teacher, Mr. Brooks considers himself to be "open to parent involvement" and believes that, "despite their level of education, there is always something that somebody can do, that they can help out in some way." "But," he adds, "I would have to really carefully decide in my mind what their (the parent) role would be and how they (the parent) would be able to help me and help the students."

When speaking of the parent-teacher relationship in general, Mr. Brooks refers to it as a "professional relationship," where "each tries to keep their distance." Speaking personally, he feels that some parents have put "a wall up between the two of us" and "didn't want to get too friendly." For the most part, however, Mr. Brooks believes that he has established a good rapport with parents, who seem "quite open" with him. He attributes this openness, in part, to the way he presents himself to parents—as "just a person who works as a teacher as a profession." This perception of himself and his belief that parents are able to help in instructional matters creates quite a different impression than that created by Mr. Simpson, to be discussed later, who considers it a "slap in the face" to think that anybody can teach.

At the end of his first year of teaching, Mr. Brooks' attitude toward parent involvement remains positive, and he reports having a greater understanding of and appreciation for parents. Over the year, he has come to feel 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 fulfil 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 respect that."

He goes on to say that "school is a part of growing up and I don't think you should have the separation between home and school that much." Thus, "next year," he is "really going to try and get some parent involvement in things like school activities. I mean it is helpful to have them doing things like . . . helping with their homework and things like that, but it would be nice to see more of a presence around the school. . . . 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."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

At this early stage of his career Mr. Brooks does not have a well-established parent involvement program in place. He does telephone parents from time to time and reports doing so more often and for different reasons at the end of the year. The end of the year calls are more inclined to be positive or casually informative rather than problem-focused as they were at the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Brooks relies on parents to assist with field trips and is pleased when they choose to take on instructional responsibilities. He mentions that on one outing "one of the parents actually took one of the units and instructed it, and we rotated between the three groups of students. That worked out very well. . . . We got a lot of good work."

As for giving parents ideas on how they can help their children at home, he says: "I've had a little bit of input . . . just minor things like making sure they have a set time at night or a place where the student can go to work on their assigned work or projects." He recognizes, however, that

he could do more in this regard and explains: "Hopefully (that is) what I'm working towards right now" by participating in this study.

Teacher Attitudes Towards Students

General

Mr. Brooks' concern for students is reflected throughout both interviews. It comes through in such comments as: "I would have to really carefully decide in my mind what their (the parent) role would be (in the classroom) and how they (parents) would be able to help me and help the students." It comes through as well in his concern for the inner resources these students will need as they make the transition to high school; and again when he speaks of a student who was a "real problem." In discussing the consultation held to review this youngster's difficulties, Mr. Brooks' attention was student-focused: he spoke of wanting to learn "what we could do to help this student."

Student Responsibility

When asked if students can take responsibility for their own education, Mr. Brooks responds with a qualified "depending on the individual child . . . yeah. Some can take more than others." He considers it his job to help them become more responsible. "As much as possible, I try to invoke that in them." He considers this particularly important "especially with them going into high school. . . . They need to be responsible for their own learning, to be responsible for the outcomes of their own actions."

There are times, however, when Mr. Brooks feels that he is not getting the home support he needs to nurture student responsibility. He tells of receiving "a lot of letters about 'so and so didn't come to school today because we went shopping late last night and didn't get home' or 'didn't have any clean clothes to wear,' things like that." He is concerned that when students "have people making those kind of excuses for them, . . . (they) aren't getting the responsibility that they need." Nonetheless,

Mr. Brooks believes that students can grow into accepting responsibility and he reports at the end of the year that he has "seen a lot of growth in most of them in that sense over the year."

Teacher Efficacy

Mr. Brooks feels that "in a lot of ways . . . (he's) just sort of keeping (his) head above water." Yet his comments portray a confident manner. For instance, although feeling constrained by the limited number of teaching strategies he has to work with, he comments: "As I go along, I'll probably learn some other methods." He states as well: "I'm not an expert on a lot of things that I teach, but through discussion and through interaction, we (teachers) usually find an answer together."

Mr. Brooks acknowledges that he worries about reaching every student and, because he has thirty students in his classroom, he "know(s)" that he is "not reaching all of them in a lot of areas as much as (he) would like to." But, he comments, "even with students who require a lot of learning assistance, there are times when maybe I found a particular way of getting through a certain concept . . . that particular method that I've tried may not work in all areas, but . . . yeah, there are times when I feel that I've really accomplished something."

Over the year, he has come to feel more comfortable dealing with parents. "From my point of view, and I think probably from the parents' point of view, too," the relationship is "a bit more relaxed. . . . I don't feel quite as uptight in asking for their help because I think part of being a parent is that they need to have that involvement." He goes on to say: "It's maybe a more trusting relationship—I hope—on their part as far as my being their son or daughter's teacher." This comment introduces an interesting notion—and one that is mentioned by no other project teacher—that to this teacher, parental trust is important and it is something that teachers must earn.

Commentary

Mr. Brooks presents himself as a teacher who has grown a great deal during his first year in the profession. He has effected change in the degree to which students accept responsibility for their learning; he has acquired a deeper understanding of and respect for parents; he has made some efforts to improve parent-teacher communication by increasing the number of times he calls parents; and he speaks of being more committed to involving parents in the future—a point that will be assessed in future years as the larger study of which this is a part continues.

Mr. Brooks: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Three families from Mr. Brooks' class were interviewed: two had daughters in his classroom; the other, a son. At the beginning of the year all parents report feeling welcome in the classroom and in the school. At the end of the year all parents continue to feel welcome in their child's classroom and by teachers in general. However, with regard to feeling welcome in the school, Parents B report: "We've been getting a cold reception." They explain: "The teacher himself is okay. It's just the principal. He doesn't know whether to give you a straight answer or not. Beating around the bush, eh, like a politician."

Each family reports a positive parent-student working relationship. Parent A comments that although her son is "at an age right now where he wants to do it on his own," she nevertheless continues to be involved. "He has done a few projects," she explains, "where he has tried to do it on his own, but after he has gone to bed . . . I have touched it up or fixed it up because he was frustrated because it wasn't good enough for him. . . . The next day he was quite pleased that it looked quite good—so overall, it wasn't too bad that mom helped him out."

Parent C remarks: "I get her frustrated. I guess every parent does, you know, especially if you repeat yourself." For Mother C, "this math business" can be problematic. "I was never good in math," she explains, but "we fight it out" and "we get the answer in the end." At the end of the year, this mother reports that during the year, her daughter began to "ask for help with things that she could figure out herself but just doesn't want to." The mother adopted the strategy of saying "yeah, just a minute, you work on it." "I try to make myself available but not available."

Teacher Regard for Students

Mother A reports that Mr. Brooks is interested in her son "as a person, not as just a student." "This teacher has a really good relationship with his students," she reports, "I really feel it." "He doesn't talk down to them. He talks to them as an equal."

Parents B describe the teacher's relationship with his students in the following way. "He has a sort of attitude, like, he doesn't, he's not there to sort of holler down or say there's more she could do. He thinks that she's there for the best in her learning. Where some of them they might say, hey, I think she can pull up her socks and do a little better than that, you know. But he seems, so far, he encourages them more."

When asked if the teacher respects students, Parents B respond: "Oh yeah." They describe a situation that occurred during the year that had caused their daughter concern. The parents advised her to "sit down and figure out what you want to say and write him a letter. If you can't talk to him, write him a letter. So she did. She went and presented it to the teacher and shortly after that we had the teacher interviews and he says: 'I got that letter from (your daughter)' and he congratulated her on expressing herself." The parents report that not only did Mr. Brooks congratulate the child for her initiative, but he acted upon her concerns, thereby alleviating her difficulty.

Like Mother B, Mother C states that Mr. Brooks respects her child. She bases her opinion on "a statement that he actually made." The teacher informed the mother that he had "kind of barked" at her daughter. He then "looked at her and he apologized. He said, 'I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to bark at you.' And he said, and he even said the words: 'I have a lot of respect for her because of what she said.' And I said: 'Well, what did she say?' And he says: 'She just turned around and looked at me and said: 'That's okay, we all have those kind of days.'"

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Parents B report that their daughter "loves to go to school." "She shows it. She comes home and she's right down to her homework and bright and early in the morning." "She would go all summer." With regard to the teacher, they note that she "doesn't come (home) and complain about (Mr. Brooks), so you know, he must have a little bit of . . . ."

Mother C also perceives a positive student-teacher relationship and comments on how this affects a parent's willingness to meet the teacher. "She liked him and she told me a little bit about him. You're a little more optimistic to meet somebody that your child has already said, 'hey, they're really nice.' " This mother reports that Mr. Brooks has "been very good with (her daughter). She's never felt uncomfortable. She'd tell me if she was." At the end of the year, the mother comments: "She still really likes him and there has been no change in feeling as far as she goes."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Mother A speaks positively of her regard for Mr. Brooks. She reports: "The meeting I (had) with (the teacher) was really positive, and I felt really good about him as a teacher and (my son) being in his class." The sentiment is the same at the end of the year. "I just felt really good with the kids' teachers this year and I just felt a lot more comfortable." Mother B provides similar feedback. "He's a good teacher. . . . I don't know where he could improve or if he can improve or should improve."

Father B is similarly impressed. "I like the guy," the father remarks. "You can go up and talk to him anytime. He's straightforward and he even comes up to us and tells us little things that she's done and how she's progressing." They describe the relationship between parents and teacher as "great—the way it is now." "I would not have said that last year," the parent adds. When asked if the nature of the relationship depends to some extent on the teacher, the family responds: "Yeah, the teacher." When asked "what in a teacher makes it great as opposed to not great," they respond: "Working with the kids. Knowing the kids. And (focusing on) needs."

Mother C responds positively to Mr. Brooks as well. "He's a very welcoming type . . . he seems to be very sincere . . . and he has always been very open." She adds: "There's been absolutely no animosity between us at all. I listened to everything he had to say about her, what he felt that she could do and should do, and he was very open about it." At the end of the year, the feeling remains the same. "I like (the teacher) she had this year."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Conversations with parents reveal that Mr. Brooks is both proactive and reactive with regard to parent involvement strategies. Parent A reports that during the month of March Mr. Brooks began using homework books with all students in the class. The parents were advised that the diaries were intended to help students "get their assignments in" and that parents were to sign it when the homework was complete. Mother A "thought that was great," and reported that her son "felt important to have his diary."

At the end of the year, Father B reports Mr. Brooks' use of the "good news telephone call." He called "just to tell how (our daughter) has been doing. 'You're doing great,' he says. 'No problems at all'"—this reported by the father who at the beginning of the year commented that teachers "don't phone unless a person's bad."

Mother C cites an instance of teacher-parent collaboration that is reactive and that successfully addressed her concerns. She reports telling

the teacher that her daughter "is the type of kid that when she reads she doesn't absorb." She and Mr. Brooks then "talked about a learning process that they have there and that . . . would help socials, that would help biology, all these things that are not factual." "I didn't know they had a learning thing here. . . . He was the one that suggested it." . . . "He asked for my approval and I said 'put her in whatever you want if you feel it's going to help her. Just let me know.'"

Mr. Brooks: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Both Students B and C describe the classroom as a "really noisy," and the latter suggests that Mr. Brooks "could make our class quieter." Nonetheless, Student C considers it a "workable" place in as much as "the kids get busy and do their work." Student A reports that those who do well on their projects have their work put on display. The classroom, according to Student C, is "fun" but "very tough. . . . We have to do all sorts of reports and tests and everything," but "it helps me learn stuff—stuff I haven't learned."

All three students comment on Mr. Brooks' use of homework books. Student B views their use positively: "You get more stuff done." She explains: "Before, he wouldn't tell us if we had homework. He would write it on the board, but we wouldn't really look on the board and he would have to remind us after school if we have it or whatever. . . . we can get our homework done faster by this homework book." This student notes as well that Mr. Brooks uses the homework book as a way to communicate with parents and to encourage their involvement in student learning. This young lady indicates that "he sometimes writes comments like 'please help (your daughter) with spelling or math because she's having a little bit of difficulties.'" She reports that her parents think the homework book is "good. They like it very much."

In addition to using homework books to communicate with parents, Student B reports that Mr. Brooks keeps her parents advised of her progress by calling "home to just give an update, like what we're doing or whatever."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Student C reports that she likes school and is "not the type of kid that would want a lot of days off because I'd like to learn a little bit more." Speaking specifically of her relationship with her teacher, she remarks that Mr. Brooks is a teacher she can "talk to" and one who is sensitive to her feelings. "Once I cried because . . . these guys were bothering me and the teacher told them, 'Don't bother her, can't you see she is very upset with you doing that?'"

To this young girl, Mr. Brooks is considerate not only of her feelings, but of her desire to participate in classroom activities. "He makes me feel welcome and important. . . . He includes me. If we have something to do, if I have my hand up, he'd include me." In her opinion, Mr. Brooks is "a really good teacher."

Count for Something

Students A and B both feel they count for something in their school and in their classroom. For Student A that feeling is created by helping in the library and the classroom. For Student B it is a matter of being able to "get along with everybody." For Student C, however, things are different. Although she reports that Mr. Brooks makes her feel important, she does not "feel welcome" by the students in her class, who call her names. And, although she commented that she can talk to Mr. Brooks, she is "afraid" to talk to him about this.

Ms. Quaid: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Ms. Quaid is an experienced teacher who is in her second year at Quadra School. This year she is working with students who present far fewer challenges than those assigned to her the previous year. During her first year at Quadra, she and other teachers new to the school were "given a lot of kids that nobody else wanted to work with" and, as a consequence, felt "dumped on."

This year, however, her students are "really quite well adjusted" and "happy with themselves." They have "very, very enriched lives" and are involved in "a large number of outside-of-school activities." They are often "going from one thing to another and some evenings, several things." In addition to the extra-curricular schedule these students maintain, they are under "a lot of pressure academically in terms of . . . marks." Ms. Quaid reports that "quite a number of kids . . . really are upset with themselves if it's not straight A's. There's no ifs, ands, or buts, they are really upset with themselves." Motivating students is not a problem. With this class, "it's not a situation where I'm beating my head against the wall saying I can't get anything out of this bunch."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

When asked to comment on parent involvement, Ms. Quaid speaks positively of both parents and their involvement in traditional parent involvement activities. She mentions that "there are a lot of really good parents out there who basically are concerned about their kids," and she speaks of a "super group" of parents that is always available to help with "hot-dog days and fund-raisers" and to help in the library.

When probed more deeply, however, other attitudes surface. For instance, while parents are at liberty to visit her classroom, Ms. Quaid does not feel compelled to involve them in the actual work of the classroom. "Sometimes," she says, "it just seems easier to do it yourself . . . it is just the

time element in terms of being organized and getting it all set out to do." She also comments that "at the grade seven level, I don't know in what ways I should be dragging them into the classroom to help out." Even if time and grade level were not an issue, confidentiality is. "You have to be careful the kind of activity you ask the parents to work with the kids because it is a very close community . . . and it can certainly . . . you know, information can . . ."—the sentence remains unfinished.

Qualification is even more apparent when parent involvement falls outside the "traditional" forms of volunteerism. Ms. Quaid reports that mothers in the school's catchment area often do not work outside the home and, as a consequence, many have become "very involved in the school" where they "feel welcome almost to an extreme" and where they "really know what's going on."

This involvement gives them knowledge that results in parents having preferences with regard to student placement in particular classrooms. It is not unusual for parents to tell the school "which classroom they'd like to have their child in." In that regard, parents "have quite a bit of input"—too much, from Ms. Quaid's point of view. "It's been a situation where the parents have been allowed to come in and make too many demands, and the demands have been allowed." While viewing the principal as generally supportive, Ms. Quaid feels that with regard to student placement and parent complaints, teachers "have not always been supported."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Although Ms. Quaid does not actively solicit parent help in the classroom, she reports using a great many strategies that keep parents informed of expectations, classroom learning, and student progress. For instance, she advises parents at the beginning of the year "to expect approximately one hour's homework every night." She alerts parents to the fact that when there is no specific homework, there are "always long term assignments, weekly assignments—so, if there isn't a specific math homework assignment from the night before, there's always something else that they can be

working on." Her advise to parents is this: "If the kids come home saying they've got nothing to do, well then, have them read a book for that amount of time."

Ms. Quaid also advises parents to phone "if any assignment comes home that looks unusual or strange, or if you or your child doesn't understand." Suggesting that an assignment may look strange to a parent suggests that Ms. Quaid anticipates her students will view their parents as resource persons and consult them when necessary. This message also conveys to parents that they are at liberty, and perhaps even expected, to assist their children with homework.

Ms. Quaid views parents as resource persons not only for her students but for herself as well. She calls them when "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 isn't up to their standard." These calls for assistance are directed to individual parents or to all parents, depending on the circumstances. She cites an example of a time when she contacted all parents. Toward the end of the year she noticed that "the quality of the work was starting to really slide . . . like they (had) all run out of gas." Upon observing this, Ms. Quaid sent a note home indicating that this is "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." Within a week, she noticed "a real, drastic improvement." The next week's letter included a note to this effect: "Thanks a lot because I have noticed that the quality of the assignments has improved again."

The parent involvement strategy that separates Ms. Quaid (and her colleague, Ms. Quinton) from the rest of the teachers participating in this study is her use of student folders. As a consequence of attending the teacher workshop, Ms. Quaid "started a folder system that goes home weekly and that encourages (parents) to write comments on it. 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." The folder contains:

examples of student work, test outcomes, information on what has been covered in class during the previous week. It also contains outlines of new units to be introduced during the coming week and a newsletter, which informs parents of upcoming tests and the material on which the students are to be tested. Through the newsletter, parents are encouraged to help their children prepare for tests and "to have a look at the work that their child (is) doing." From Ms. Quaid's perspective, the folders keep parents "really aware of what is going on and, . . . in a knowledgeable way, they can look at their child's work or help in terms of study or things like that." Through the folders, parents "gain a lot of information in terms of what the kids are doing and it has been really positive."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Ms. Quaid's concern for students shows itself in many ways. With regard to their lives outside school, she expresses concern that because of the enriched lives these students live, they "seldom have a chance just to play and be kids and sort of unwind from everything else." With regard to in-school behaviour, she notes with some concern that she's "got quite a number of kids who really are upset with themselves if it's not straight A's. There's no ifs, ands, or buts, they are really upset with themselves." She quickly adds, "don't get me wrong . . . academics are really important . . . , but I don't feel to that extent." When anything less than an A causes a child to feel that he or she is "not as good a person" and if, as a consequence, "their self-image isn't good or if they're not happy with themselves," she questions "what do the marks count for?"

Concern for her students is also evident in her practice of providing students with regular performance appraisals. Halfway through the term, Ms. Quaid explains to the students: "If I had to give you your report card today, here is where your marks are. And it is either pat yourself on the back, you are doing really well, or you've got enough time to pull up your socks before report card time." Ms. Quaid advises that this conversation

takes place between student and teacher. "It's not me phoning the parents or whatever . . . it's just for the children to let them know how they are doing . . . they can be chugging along and not have a clue how they are doing . . . I will update them . . . in enough time to do something about where they are at."

There are, however, times when it is important to discuss performance with parents. On these occasions, Ms. Quaid "always ask(s) the kid too." The message she wants to convey to the student is: "I'm not going to say something different that I wouldn't say to you."

Another indicator of this teacher's concern for students and their performance is her practice of letting students into the classroom "really early in the morning . . . up to quarter after eight. . . . they have about twenty-five minutes and they can come in and work." Ms. Quaid also uses the early morning sessions to "set up review classes" or to "let kids rewrite tests." She notes that parents as well as students are aware of this practice. "If a child forgets a book or couldn't get all of their math questions, didn't understand this, couldn't finish that, the parents know that . . . 'get into school, Mrs. Quaid is there and she will work with you.'" Ms. Quaid reports that the early morning sessions become "habit forming" for some students. At the end of the year, seven or eight students were coming in "on a regular basis to finish up work" or because "morning was just their time that they did better at it as opposed to in the evenings."

These early morning sessions are also indicative of Ms. Quaid's concern for students as they leave the relative security of the elementary school and venture into secondary school. She believes these sessions prepare students for high school, where she knows "they are allowed into the school early and they can go in and work. So it is sort of habit forming."

Ms. Quaid also demonstrates a willingness to work co-operatively with students in the way she introduces major projects. "In longer term assignments, research assignments, the kids always, at the beginning of the assignment, get a one or two page total outline with full assignments, and

we discuss it and we fit in together a due date and decide how long it's going to take us to do this. We'll make a judgement on that together. I try to give them a lot of input in terms of that." In establishing these guidelines, Ms. Quaid is sensitive to the need for students to experience success and, therefore, encourages students to set realistic goals because, she tells them: "I want you to meet what you say you can do."

In addition to working with the class in this way, Ms. Quaid is willing to negotiate with individual students. She mentions that with "almost any activity that they do for me, they can come up and say: 'Could I just change this and do it this way?' " Ms. Quaid indicates that her teaching benefits from this kind of collaborative arrangement. "When they come up with a new idea, I love it because then I add it to my list of activities."

Student Responsibility

In Ms. Quaid's opinion, the grade seven students with whom she works "are really very capable. They're capable of doing so much themselves" and "they are often used as helpers with the primary classes," which "is really good for them." Not only are these students capable, they are responsible as well. "Eighty-five per cent of them, without any feedback from me, do their homework, do extra or whatever. It's nice. I'm not complaining."

Ms. Quaid explains that when homework is not completed, "there's no death penalty here." She adopts the attitude: "So you didn't get it done, what can you do about it? When can you get it done?" She reports that it "doesn't take them very long to realize that the 85 excuses really aren't going to work. And eventually they accept that 'yes, I goofed up—now what am I going to do about it?' It is no big deal. It doesn't make you a bad person, but 'yeah, I blew it—now what can I do about it?' kind of thing. It doesn't take them too long to sort through that."

If students forget their books or encounter difficulty with their homework, Ms. Quaid reports that they are "in here bright and early finishing up stuff or . . . I was doing my math last night, but I didn't understand this

question." On the whole, Ms. Quaid describes her students as being "quite positive in their attitude in getting things done" and in completing assignments. There is "none of this, well why should I bother to do extra. This is good enough." On the contrary, "out of the blue, on their own, they'll put extra effort into something or do more."

Teacher Efficacy

Although Ms. Quaid admits to occasionally feeling that she has not served a child well, for the most part her comments suggest satisfaction with professional accomplishments. At the beginning of the year this is reflected in her perception that students are satisfied with classroom life. She reports, for instance, that students are "really happy to be in there." She notes as well that she has "really good attendance . . . super attendance. . . . It's not like gee, it's a boring place to be. I don't like it or kids pick on me so we're sick a lot." She also reports that "a high percentage (of students) come back to visit." At the end of the year, Ms. Quaid notes that "for most of them—at least for the majority of the year—. . . it was alright." "In terms of what I had control over—I think it is alright."

Ms. Quaid: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Two parents from Ms. Quaid's grade seven class were interviewed: each family has a daughter in this classroom. Mother A and her husband are "quite satisfied with this school—they really care." She "definitely" feels welcome there, in part because the parents "have been told 'if you have any questions whatsoever, get hold of them at any time.' " Based on past experience with teachers at this school, the parents are confident that they will be contacted if difficulties arise.

Mother B is of the same opinion with regard to feeling welcome in the school. "The atmosphere is friendly" and the conversation "pleasant." "I

don't think it could have gotten much better." This mother also mentions the "tone of the newsletter. . . . It makes you feel like you're part of it."

Teacher Regard for Students

Parents A believe that Ms. Quaid does demonstrate respect for her students. Their opinion is based on the belief that the teacher allows the students "to voice their opinions or their views, be it along her lines of thinking or different from her ways of thinking. I think that that . . . shows respect." These parents believe that another indicator of teacher respect is her "letting them work to the higher level that they wish to. . . . Like, she encourages them. And if she sees somebody that's able, she lets them do it, or helps them do it."

Mother B also believes that Ms. Quaid respects her students. Having observed student and teacher behaviours, she is of the opinion that they—student and teacher—both feel "we're okay and we like each other."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Parents A report that their daughter "is happy to go to school in the mornings. . . . (She) doesn't stay home unless she is really sick . . . And then you have to struggle to keep her home." This young girl takes her schoolwork "very seriously. . . . And that is something that she has developed herself." They report that "she is enjoying it (school) this year. . . . She has gotten involved in more of the extra (curricular activities): library club and volleyball, kid's council." Their daughter is more engaged academically as well. "Definitely from last year to this year, she enjoys her schoolwork a lot more and her marks show it." They are not certain what accounts for the change: "If it's the teacher or if it's the changing grades, or the subjects got more interesting, or the fact that most of her best friends are in the other class. One of those things or a combination thereof."

Mother B's comments on this topic are limited to the statement that her daughter "feels happy about (school)."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Mother A reports feeling comfortable in her interactions with the teacher. She states: "I know for a fact that I can drop in after school or at lunch time or break time without an appointment with the teacher." However, when asked if their child's teacher sees them as partners in their child's education, the parents respond: "That's a goofy one. I don't know. We've never really discussed what she thinks a parent's role is. I don't think that topic has ever come up, even when we go there to talk to her at the interview or whatever. Couldn't say." At the end of the year, the relationship continues to be described as "good, if fairly formal."

Mother B also is comfortable with Ms. Quaid, whom she describes as a "really good, strong teacher." "There's been times when I've had to drop something off during the day, and I haven't felt like I was interfering. I get a big smile or whatever."

This mother is a teacher herself and is familiar with the schools and other professionals in the district. She is asked if a non-teacher would feel as comfortable approaching Ms. Quaid as she does. She replies: "I would think so, just the personalities of the people." She believes that Ms. Quaid would view parents as being a part of the educational team. She explains: "Given what's happened in the past, I certainly view the school as seeing a team, parents and teachers together, and knowing Ms. Quaid—I've known her before—I know that's how she views it as well."

Teacher Strategies: Parent Involvement

Mother A reports that there is communication between home and school. "It's there," she says, "but it's sort of once removed. Most of the time it is through (our daughter)."

Mother B reports that Ms. Quaid sends tests home for parental review and signature. She comments: "I see that as part of ensuring that the parents are aware of what's happening." During the year, Ms. Quaid also "adopted a file that they send home every Thursday. I like it," she com-

ments. She notes that the teacher of another daughter in the school has adopted the file folder routine as well, "even though (she is) not part of the program (the study)." Mother B is satisfied with the amount of parent-home communication. "I am hoping that it will transfer to the high school."

Ms. Quaid: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Student A speaks positively of her classroom. "I like it just the way it is." "It's easy to understand because the teacher explains what to do and you catch on quickly." Those students who do not catch on quickly, "can go and talk to the teacher in the morning. We can come in early and ask any questions. . . . If you need help, the teachers explain it to you like good."

Student A reports that classroom learning is extended into the home in two ways: one, through the "folder" that goes home with the students every Thursday; and two, through the expectation that students are to request help from their parents should they need assistance with homework, of which there is "usually . . . at least an hour's worth." "If we're having trouble with our homework, then they (our parents) are . . . sort of supposed to and they're allowed to help us." Student B concurs. "She said that if my mom and dad could help me to get them to help. I think she just expects us, if we're having problems, to at least ask for help."

Student B is also satisfied with her classroom. It is a place where students "are always doing something new" and where the teacher makes learning fun. For instance, on Friday afternoons the class "play(s) bingo except she (Ms. Quaid) asks multiplication questions." It is "pretty fun."

Although class can be "fun," Student A reports teacher practices that indicate close monitoring of student progress. "When we have tests, (Ms. Quaid) usually clips a piece of paper that says how we are doing so far, overall, in that subject." Monitoring student achievement is mentioned in another context as well. Similar to a comment made by Student A, Student

B reports: the teachers "really discuss the work with us. . . . If we're having any problems, they will keep us in at recess and explain it further to us." As the following quotation suggests, the teacher also responds positively when students request assistance beyond regular classroom hours. "Once (Ms. Quaid) had an hour staff meeting after school and I was going to ask her for help and she said that if I came in early the next morning she would help me."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Student A speaks well of the teachers and students at Quadra School. They are "nice." She also speaks favourably of various features of school life that contribute to her and her family's positive regard for the school. One, the school encourages students from grades four to seven to express their concerns. This is done through the "kids' council," which meets every Monday. "Two kids from each class . . . go to the meetings and there's a teacher there too." They discuss "bad things that are happening at the school and the good things that are happening at the school and then we have suggestions about how we can make the school better." Two, "there are a whole bunch of activities that parents, teachers, and kids can join into. . . . We built an adventure playground and it was all parents who built the playground. . . . There are family dances . . . things like that." Three, the weekly newsletter in which there are "little columns of really good things the kids have done—like stories and poems."

Student B also speaks favourably of her school. "It is fun." She also reports that she "know(s) all of the teachers" and "that helps." Like her classmate, she, too, is of the opinion that her parents think well of the school. "I think they like it. I think they enjoy it."

Speaking specifically of her classroom, Student B reports that she and her friends "all like our teacher and our classmates." She adds, however, that "most of the kids in our class don't like school. I think they just don't like that they have to work." She, on the other hand, reports that her parents have "explained . . . that I have to stay in college and university for

a long time and work hard." Given this, it is not surprising that her response to the question "Whose job is it to make sure that you learn?" is "I think it is mostly the person who is suppose to be learning it."

Count for Something

When asked if she feels like she counts for something in Ms. Quaid's classroom, Student A replies: "I'm just like everybody else in the class. . . . We do the same kind of stuff . . . like we don't do anything special. Like one person doesn't go off and do something special while the rest of us are in the class. . . . She doesn't make kids sit out while the rest of the class does something else." She also reports feeling part of the group. "People talk to me . . . they don't ignore me or anything."

For Student B a sense of being valued comes from being "picked" to "work ahead in Math" and by being selected for "most of the enrichment things." It is also based on Ms. Quaid's practice of encouraging students to help one another. "If we are working on Math and it is a hard thing, she might explain it to one person and then that person will go explain it to somebody else."

Ms. Quinton: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Though a teacher with several years experience, this is the first year Ms. Quinton has taught at the school to which she is presently assigned. She is working with a "very wrangy bunch of kids. They're tough kids . . . who don't want to work." One teacher has described them as "selfish," a description with which she agrees. "They think of themselves and that's it." It is important to note, however, that there are also eight straight A students in Ms. Quinton's class who "are very demanding for information and more information." And for many of those who are not A students, parents are asking: "Well, what can we do to get them up there?" "The parents expect a lot" and, with regard to "the academic standard, . . . parents demand it "

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Ms. Quinton has had disputes with parents from time to time, yet these specific events have not created a negative attitude toward parents in general. She believes that parents "want to be involved with what the kids are doing, which is important, very important." In order to accommodate parent interest, she says: "One of my jobs is to let the parents know" what is happening with their children and to let them know "that they can take part." If teachers and parents are to build the kind of rapport that she considers desirable, "although it's hard . . . we've got to, as teachers, fit our timetables around them (parents) to make it more convenient for them."

It is also important, she believes, that parents "be told that they really affect how I do from the kid's point of view and from the teacher's point of view." With this in mind, she notes: "I have to sell myself to the parents as well as the kids."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Ms. Quinton reports using a variety of parent involvement strategies. She is unique amongst project teachers in the way she promotes student-parent

communication. At the beginning of the year, for instance, she encourages her students "to tell their parents two or three things each day that they've done." She "tell(s) that to the parents" as well. She also reports encouraging students to think in terms of their "parents learning too along with you." She explains to them that "not all of them (parents) know the material and you have to take it home and explain it to them."

Ms. Quinton provides examples of one-on-one interactions with parents who have specific concerns regarding their child. Additionally, she, like Ms. Quaid, has a more systematic approach to parent involvement than many of the other project teachers. For instance, "when parents come in to watch at the beginning of October, 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 up his hand answering questions, things like that. I go through this with them beforehand so they're not sort of looking at the sheet 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."

She also invites parents into her classroom for instructional purposes. At the end of the year she reports: "I did 'careers' and pulled a whole bunch of parents because we've got a wide variety of them in the classroom doing different things. . . . Also, we were doing a comparison and averaging of salaries, so the parents were explaining . . . their salaries. It was really super. I was apprehensive about it at first, but it was one of those things!" One part of this event was particularly moving for Ms. Quinton. One father, who had been laid off, came in and "talked about his job and he said: 'Now, I've been laid off and we're not earning anything. We're going on social assistance' and then explained to the kids what that was. And I thought, whew!"

Her inclination to view parents as instructional leaders is seen again in her approach to field trips. Worksheets that students are to complete during the outing are reviewed with parents during an evening prior to the

event. In this way, "they know what I'm looking for." Parents "are free to add extras and things that they can do, which they really enjoy."

To keep parents apprised of student activities and progress she sends home monthly reports. "On the first teaching day of the month, they get a report on how they're doing in the five major subjects and what their activities are, whether they've been working or whether they need to pull up their socks. . . . I don't wait for reports cards. . . . It keeps the communication going with parents." Based on her experience, the practice of reporting monthly makes the task of preparing report cards easier. She reports: "I've had really positive response to those. . . . A number of parents have come in and said, 'hey, we're really pleased.' "

Telephone contact with parents is another strategy Ms. Quinton uses regularly. Some parents she phones "every second day . . . letting them know if their kids are doing their work." "Phone calls," she reports very specifically, "start between six and eight o'clock." By providing her home phone number to parents—"it went home with the first newsletter"—she conveys the message that they can call if they feel the need to do so. She conveys, as well, a willingness to make herself available at times convenient to the parent.

One further example of her commitment "to keep communications going" is her use of student folders. Each Thursday, samples of student work are sent home for parent review and are returned to the school. For students who are experiencing difficulty with some aspect of their schoolwork, remedial worksheets are included to provide necessary practice and to prepare students for upcoming tests. Ms. Quinton discovered that "just sending them (the worksheets) home" was not enough. She explains: "The parent would sometimes be completely lost." Realizing this, she now makes sure that "there's an explanation on how I want it done."

Another way Ms. Quinton encourages parent rapport is through an "open classroom policy, where the parents come in at any time if they want to." She insists, however, that they phone in advance so that parent observa-

tions do not distract students at critical times, while they are writing scheduled tests, for instance. Another way the open door policy is used is when Ms. Quinton is having problems with a student. In this situation she will invite the parent(s) into the classroom to "just watch" and will "set up different times so that there's different subject areas where the kids are having the problems."

In these ways Ms. Quinton addresses what she considers to be one of the greatest barriers to parent involvement: lack of parent-teacher communication and parents "not knowing what the kids are doing." "Knowing" has a particular meaning to Ms. Quinton. To be aware that a child is doing "a unit on space," for instance, is not sufficient. To "know" is to know the choices students are expected to make and what they are expected to do in order to succeed.

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

As noted previously, Ms. Quinton feels she is working with a "wrangy bunch of kids." Her comments, however, do not belabour this point, nor do they reveal a sense of hopelessness or exasperation. On the contrary, the words she reports create an image of a very productive classroom.

Her concern for the academic success of her students is revealed by her practice of "checking on their work and reviewing what we've done and seeing whether they have . . . the necessary skills to do the things" she asks them to do. For those students who are experiencing difficulty, she has them in after school to provide further assistance. "They're using their time, but if they're having problems, it's the only time I have free."

Concern for students is also demonstrated by her practice of contacting parents to determine if their children have had difficulty with certain subjects or concepts in the past or to determine if problems in the home may be affecting the student's ability to perform at school. She also notices when "someone is doing a super job" and takes the time to phone parents and

apprise them of their child's success. Ms. Quinton believes in letting her students know when she is pleased with their performance. "The important thing," she says, is that her students are "positive about what they're doing and they feel good about it."

Student Responsibility

Ms. Quinton has strong beliefs about the importance of students accepting responsibility for their own learning. When asked if she believes that children can take responsibility for their own education, she replies: "Sure, a lot more than they do." "It's their education. They are not in control of it, but they need to realize the effect that it's going to have on them. Making them realize that if they don't get a good education, if they're not feeling good about it, then they're not going to do well." What we need to do, she comments, is "give the kids more responsibility." She believes that "we have a tendency to do it for them a lot, but we shouldn't." To encourage responsibility, she holds her students accountable for turning in assignments on time. "If I didn't," she predicts at the beginning of the year, "I wouldn't get anything handed in." "That way they learn more responsibility and whose fault is it that it's late?"

Ms. Quinton realizes, however, that some children need to be taught time management and how to be responsible. "What we do in class, I go over with them in class. OK, you've got this time, this time, and this time. This is the assignment. It's due in at this date. How should you regulate your time? What's coming up? Look at the things that are coming up."

At the end of the year, Ms. Quinton continues to stress the importance of students being accountable and the belief that by grade six her expectations are reasonable, though not always met.

Teacher Efficacy

Ms. Quinton values working in a school where the parents expect a lot from teachers. "I enjoy it because that means I'm that much better prepared because I'm expected to be."

She is asked at the beginning of the year if she worries about reaching all her students. She responds: "I spend a lot of time making sure I do." When asked if she affects every child, she replies: "Yes, definitely. Most of them in a positive way." She admits that "some of them are fighting me right now, but hopefully by the end of the year they won't be." At the end of the year, she is equally as positive. Is she reaching all her students? "I know I am. I make sure I am."

At the end of the year she is asked again if she feels effective with every child. She answers: "I do. I do . . . There are times when you pull your hair out. You think 'what am I doing wrong with this kid,' but usually you can work through it." Her colleagues assure her of her success with this "wrangy" group of students by observing that "those kids have come so far." To Ms. Quinton, this feedback and the student success make "it really well worthwhile."

With regard to her students, she is obviously pleased that "the kids are working and they're producing and the things that they're producing are phenomenal. I look at it and I think, whoa, this is great and I feel really positive about it and they (the students) know it."

Her willingness to admit to making mistakes is another indication of confidence. "I'm human," she says, "I make mistakes. . . . I try not to, but every once in a while I do and the parents will catch me up on it or the kids. Then everybody learns."

Commentary

Apart from feeling more comfortable within her new school and with her colleagues at the end of the year, there were few if any changes in either

attitudes or practices from Time 1 to Time 2. Ms. Quinton is a teacher who seemingly joined the project with a very positive attitude toward students and parent involvement and with many desirable parent involvement strategies already in place. One change in practice that could be attributed to the project workshop for teachers was the introduction of the student folders that Ms. Quinton sends home on a weekly basis.

Ms. Quinton: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Family A reports feeling welcome in their daughter's school. "Nobody stops me at the door and tells me I am not welcome. They are all very friendly . . . sometimes they get turned around at school and they're really helpful in finding the classroom or the teacher or whatever else you need to find."

Parents B also feel welcome in their child's school. They cite several reasons: school sponsored activities; teacher encouragement to visit; good communication in the form of weekly bulletins from the school and the teacher; being made aware of when and where meetings are; and the attitude of the staff when parents are "on site."

Mother C's perception of the school does not differ. She, too, feels "very" welcome there. She attributes her reactions to: the school climate; the friendliness and always the open-door feeling; the hardworking teachers, whose efforts impress her; the general feeling of welcomeness in the school; and the "very positive" newsletters.

Teacher Regard for Students

Parents A question whether Ms. Quinton does respect their daughter. Their uncertainty stems from their daughter's reports that "maybe she (Ms. Quinton) doesn't listen to her."

Family B does not question that Ms. Quinton treats her students well. They do, however, question the use of the term "respect" in this regard. From their point of view, "it is easier to talk about other words." "Concern," for instance, and it "is there." In spite of definitional problems—"respect is a hard thing to put into that context"—they nonetheless, offer the following thoughts and observations. Respect "should be there definitely." And, "I would say, thinking about it, she respects the child's situation. She doesn't downgrade him."

Mother C's positive regard for Ms. Quinton's relationship with her students is reflected in her comments on a number of teacher practices. For instance, Ms. Quinton encourages students to do their corrections by improving their mark when the corrections are completed satisfactorily. "I think (this) is commendable," the mother notes, and, being teacher herself, she indicates that she is "going to start (this practice) with (her) own class. It's just that incentive is there and that's the whole object of it is to achieve mastery." Mother C's positive regard for Ms. Quinton is also reflected in her perception of the teacher-student relationship. "She's very commendable and complimentary. Free with praise."

Student Regard For Teacher

Parents A report that there are times when their daughter considers Ms. Quinton unfair. The daughter was upset, for instance, that others, who the daughter considered less qualified than herself, were chosen to participate in enrichment activities. Nonetheless, their daughter enjoys school. "I can't really say she doesn't like it, because she does really well. I don't know how they cannot like it and do so well." "She studies and she makes sure her homework is done. She is quite independent that way—she makes sure her school work is done on time."

Parents B report that their son "has always liked school. . . . "We don't see any examples of things that indicate he doesn't. . . . He has never said that he didn't want to go to school. If there wasn't a positive relationship between him and the teacher, it might be different.

The mother of Student C believes that her daughter "really likes school. I wouldn't say she loves it. It's that old thing." Although her daughter generally likes school, Mother C notes that there are problems in the classroom that "very much affect the learning situation." There is a group of boys that misbehaves and that "spoils the climate in the classroom." In addition to the behavioural problems, this mother is concerned that her daughter is not challenged in this classroom and "often . . . has nothing to do." This mother, however, has taught her children that "if you're bored, that's your own fault. You find something that is going to challenge you." As a consequence, the day of the interview, the student went to school with a book of mazes and puzzles that the mother had "made up for each of (her) girls that they keep in their desks . . . just because I want them to have something that keeps them challenged."

These negative aspects of classroom life, however, seem not to have interfered with Student C's commitment to her schoolwork. "She sets her own study time doesn't need prodding to get her homework done. It's just done."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

From Parent A's perspective, Ms. Quinton "is no problem . . . she has always been friendly . . . very friendly and open. . . . She is very good." This is a contrast to her experience with her son's teacher, who teaches grade four in the same school. That teacher, the mother explains, "does not take the time of day to be friendly. . . . No time for a smile sort of thing." Although Mother A and Ms. Quinton have not discussed the nature of their relationship, she says: "I hope that she (Ms. Quinton) sees us as pretty important players, because we are, and I'm sure she is intelligent enough to realize that."

There is "no doubt" from Family B's perspective that Ms. Quinton sees them as a partner in their son's education. "Any time we have ever talked to her, it has been brought up and encouraged." In their opinion, the relationship between parent and teacher has improved during the year. At the

beginning of the year, they found Ms. Quinton's style of dress somewhat off-putting. It was "not professional." "At the outset, . . . our opinions were driven by her appearance . . . (and) there were some activities in the class—it was pretty wild. But those things have now gone by." At the year-end interview, the parents report: "We have more mutual understanding (and) there is more follow-up on her part, more contact. I feel more confident now. Maybe because we have got to know her. The weekly reports have brought the relationship up. . . . We feel that if there is a problem, we can deal with her."

Mother C indicates that during parent-teacher interviews, Ms. Quinton "gives you the feeling that she would like to work as a partner, that she appreciates you being an advocate for your child. She's been very receptive. We have gone to her with concerns about our daughter's enrichment and because she is in a class with some behaviour problems, a lot of time is spent on those boys as it has been since the day they arrived at the school. . . . We've expressed concerns about enrichment and Ms. Quinton followed through with that and we appreciate that."

Although Mother C speaks very favourably of Ms. Quinton, she does not feel comfortable when they meet. She explains: "The teacher is very nervous and I think she's probably nervous. I don't know if it's just her personality, or if she's just nervous with us, but she always seemed nervous, so that makes me nervous."

One factor that does cause difficulty for Mother C is that she, too, is a teacher and a vice-principal. This, she feels, causes an "uncomfortableness" that prevents her from being as direct with Ms. Quinton as she would like to be. She provides the following example. "When my daughter was doing a study of Nigeria, she didn't even know how to pronounce the words. So all I realized was that no teaching had gone on. She'd been given the book and there were the questions and you do the questions and there was no real discussion. . . . Those are the sorts of things that I would have liked to have gone to the teacher with and said: "How come she doesn't even know what this means and what have you done to teach this? But I couldn't do

that." Her reluctance is "partly" a consequence of her "other role" and "partly just a general uncomfortableness with any kind of going to the school and making a scene and partly because (my daughter) survived . . . what others might not."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Family A reports four teacher-initiated parent involvement activities: one, Ms. Quinton's practice of sending home folders, "a notebook package sort of thing with all of the tests and special things that (the) class has done," which the parents review, sign, and return to the school; two, an invitation to parents to call Ms. Quinton at home should they have any concerns. Although Father A did "not feel comfortable" phoning Ms. Quinton at home, he remembered the invitation and "did it anyway" when his daughter was upset about not being selected for a special activity. "I let the teacher know how (my daughter) felt. Not that I thought that she was unfair, but that (my daughter) felt that she might be. And she (Ms. Quinton) invited (my daughter) to go to school early the next morning and talk to her." The father continues: "I feel sorry for the teachers, because I know that there is a limited number that they can do and they are probably getting flak from all directions. So, like I say, I didn't feel comfortable (calling her at home), but I did because (my daughter) was obviously quite upset;" three, providing parents with suggestions regarding the "ideal homework spot" including "a little diagram showing all of the things that would make doing homework in this . . . nice, quiet little spot . . . more efficient." The parents followed through on these suggestions, now, they say, "We just have to get her to use it;" four, keeping parents informed of their child's progress and advising them of learning-related issues that would benefit from parental support.

Family B also mentions the weekly folders, which include "work highlights of what they have done well and bombed on." The folders have a space for parent signatures and "notes on what you want to discuss." "These weekly folders have made a difference," the parents report. They "make us

more aware of the problems. It is a tangible reminder of what we should be doing." The folders are "over and above" the "monthly reports" that the teacher sends to parents. Taking into account both the folders and the monthly reports, Parents B remark: "We have had more contact with (their son's) teacher this year. There is more feedback than there was a couple of years ago."

These parents also mention that Ms. Quinton "certainly has indicated that she would welcome help at home. The reason there is simple—the more you help at home, the better the student results are going to be." The parents mention that one way teachers could facilitate parental support would be to hold a "curriculum meeting . . . at the beginning of the year."

Ms. Quinton's practice of sending home folders is also remarked upon by Mother C, who indicated at the end of the year that this was a definite change from beginning of the year practices. Her daughter's "work used to come home at any time, and now knowing that we can expect that to come on Thursday has been a definite change." This mother also appreciates the information Ms. Quinton includes in the folder, "where it's listed what's going on in her room and that's where I'm getting information on a lot of work for her. Very helpful, I think." "Actually," Mother C remarks, "the value of this program (the research study) has been that expectation that every Thursday there's something that's going to come home and it has listed what has gone on in the week and all her work is in one folder." Another benefit of the folders is that "if there were a problem, it would be indicated there, so that I would know if there needed to be some follow-up from home."

Another teacher practice that has been greeted favourably by Family C, is Ms. Quinton's willingness to accommodate family work schedules. Mother C explains: "My husband, it's important to him that he attends as well so we book appointments before school. Actually, (Ms. Quinton) has been very good about that, arriving at 7:30 in the morning to meet with her is something I admire her for, so that my husband could be on time for work."

Ms. Quinton: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

There is "not really" anything that Student A would like done differently in her classroom. The learning environment is "pretty good," although the room could be better equipped with more "encyclopedias and stuff," and it would be helpful if it were less noisy. Although she describes the classroom as "pretty good," Student A is not pleased with the group of students with whom she has been placed. "They have some of the more fortunately smart people stuck with the good group, but some people who are kind of in-between, like me, they're stuck with the horrible group. And they usually get kind of taken over because I'm with the bad group and they're always yelling and screaming and I don't always get my work done."

Student B appears not to have the same problem getting his work done in this classroom where, he says, "the people . . . are nice." On the contrary, he comments that the classroom is "fine because you can get lots of work done." Although he, too, is of the opinion that the classroom could be "a little quieter because usually it is pretty loud."

Student B speaks positively of Ms. Quinton's habit of giving "us a list of what we have to do on that date and for the first half hour of that day she will discuss all our work, like our Math, and go over stuff, and then we have to have it done before recess or by the end of the year whatever, . . . which is very good. We can work at our own pace." Other features of classroom life that he enjoys include "gum chewing days" and the days "where you can't talk . . . it's fun," he says. On the other hand, he also enjoys the opportunity to talk. Ms. Quinton "will let us talk amongst—like, we are in groups—she will let us talk, but we can't be like yelling across the class or whatever." Although both students comment on the noisy classroom, Student B observes that Ms. Quinton does monitor the noise level in the room. "The teacher will tell people to be quiet during certain subjects. Like if it is a subject that is not majorly important, like Art, she will let people

talk, but not really loud and stuff, just to a certain point. And then if it gets too loud, we won't be able to talk at all if it gets really loud, which is good."

The opportunity to talk also gives students the opportunity to help one another. Student B, who was in a split class the previous year, enjoys being in "one big class of straight grade sixes, because there is more people that you can get ideas from and stuff like that. So you don't have to be like, you don't know what's going on for a bit of the time when some people are gone." In fact, Ms. Quinton "encourages us to help the person beside you, if they are having a problem. And she will notice . . . what she does is . . . sit back for a half hour and she will watch you working, and she will mark you on how you help people and how you work by yourself, and you are not screaming and yelling and making noise and stuff like that."

Student B also notes that Ms. Quinton will give people who "don't understand work . . . a couple minutes extra time" or she will give them "extra help after school."

Student C also comments on classroom learning. She remarks: "At the beginning of the year, we didn't do so much work and now . . . we're doing more work . . . and the work is getting harder." As a consequence, "my parents have to get more involved in proof-reading."

The folders that were mentioned so consistently by parents are also mentioned by all three students. Student A reports that when they arrive at home, she and her parents "talk about what's brought in there. We discuss it." Student B speaks favourably of the folders as well. They are "good because then your parents know how you are doing in school, so they don't just know by interim or by report card how you are doing. They can actually check up on you if you are doing work and stuff like that." His parents like the folders, too. "They can see my work and help me with it or whatever. It is good for them because they can ask me if there is a quiz coming up, they can take the work from that and just go over it with me and help me study and stuff like that." Student C also volunteers positive comments about the folder system. "Before we started to get the folders out, my parents didn't

see the work that was happening in my class and now they are seeing a lot more."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

As Father A noted, there was an occasion when, although he felt uncomfortable doing so, he called the teacher at home. He felt it necessary to discuss with her how upset his daughter was at not being selected for the enrichment program. When Student A broached this subject during the interview, she was asked why she herself had not approached her teacher. Her response was: "I didn't want to speak to my teacher about that. (I was) afraid she'd yell at me or something."

Student A does not find Ms. Quinton as friendly as other teachers she has had. "Our teacher," she notes, "tends not to praise us on our work." This is different from a teacher in the past to whom this young girl had responded well. "Mrs. X, she was really friendly. She used to talk to us and everything. . . . She's a teacher who could pass as our friend." Despite this young girl's reservations about her teacher, her parents think well of Ms. Quinton. She reports: "They like my teachers," as they do her school, which "they think is great."

Not surprisingly, given Student B's positive comments regarding the classroom environment, he reports: "I like my teacher. I like how we do our work and stuff." He continues: "Our teacher is very nice because she thinks like you. Like she will know what you feel like and stuff. . . . So usually she knows what we are going through when we have to go in. . . . Like, if I need some help or something, she will understand. She knows all our basic needs, like Fred over here needs help with Math and then Reading or whatever, and she will help us with all of them. . . . She is my favourite teacher so far."

Count for Something

Student A is ambivalent about whether or not she "counts for something" in her classroom. Being picked to do "backdrops and pictures" because she is "a pretty good artist" makes her feel good. However, further to her father's comments, she notes: "I'm not usually picked for extra-curricular whatever activities." As reported above, this was cause for upset. Being promised an opportunity to participate in the enrichment program the following year did not appease her.

Student B believes that he and other students do count for something both in the classroom and the school. Speaking specifically of the classroom, he notes that "most people are needed to either be helped or give help with other people who need help like in Math or something. . . . She really encourages us to help the person beside you if they are having a problem and she will notice."

Mr. Richards: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Richards is new to Radmore School. He has been absent from the teaching profession for five years and at the time of participating in this project has just returned to the classroom. He enjoys teaching at Radmore School, where there is "a good blend of intellectual discussion and humour" amongst the staff and where teachers are given the opportunity to "run their own show." He also values the opportunity to work with a principal who "is a support person and very good at it."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Mr. Richards believes that "parents should be involved right from the beginning. They should be involved in understanding the objectives for the school, of the system. . . . It would be of great benefit," he comments, "to have their buy-in and commitment right at the beginning."

Parents, Mr. Richards remarks, "certainly have the potential and the commitment and the desire to help their children." They are "an untapped reserve" who "don't really know how helpful they could be." Mr. Richards indicates that if that "untapped reserve" is to be developed, "there needs to be more talk between teachers and parents." These sentiments remain consistent throughout the year as does the belief that parent involvement "needs to be done on a school-wide basis. There needs to be enthusiasm and school direction . . . There needs to be a common shared commitment from a lot of people." He explains: "I'm not trying to pass the buck. It's just on a classroom basis, you seem to get involved in so many other things. . . . It needs to be a common, shared commitment from a lot of people. . . . It's got to be up there (on the agenda), and it's got to be held up there because there's a lot of inertia."

Whereas at the beginning of the year there is a tendency for Mr. Richards to keep the discussion of parent involvement at the level of the school, at the end of the year the conversation becomes more personal. He

then provides reasons for the "inertia" of which he speaks. "I guess . . . I get a little frustrated with myself. Yes, I think there's a big role for parents in the school," however, "I think there's maybe a defensiveness on teachers' part, myself included." He indicates that to involve parents it would not be necessary to restructure things "that much . . . I need to just set up a working relationship with a parent. I need to invite them into the class, and I need to get them involved in the learning process. I would let it grow from there. I would let their interest define where they would fit and where they would want to help. That's not something I would lay on parents." This willingness to involve parents in instructional matters is a departure from a sentiment expressed early in the year when Mr. Richards reported that "I look at teaching for learning as the area in which I work in, and I look for help from parents in behaviour."

Mr. Richards comments that "parents are intimidated by the system" and are "too often . . . brought in after the fact" and then "asked to stand up for issues that . . . they haven't been brought in previously to." Overcoming this situation may not be easy given that "it's so easy for teachers to fall into discussions with teachers and leave others out." There is also the problem that, generally, "the attitude of a lot of teachers is defensive. . . . they see the parent as potentially being critical of something that 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. There's not the regular, ongoing contact with parents and teachers. So usually when we do meet, there's a problem that we have to get through, which is not always the best way to build a relationship."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Although Mr. Richards sees merit in the idea of making "it a regular thing to call a parent monthly or every few weeks to let them know how things are going or just to pass the time of day—to keep the connection alive," he indicates that "the ones I have the most involvement with are the ones that 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 . . . that personalized the relationship"—this in spite of the sympathetic attitudes expressed above and the belief that "a lot of parents are probably sensitive about getting involved in a child's education because they're not invited." "We're all like that," he says, "if we're not invited in, we don't feel welcome."

Apart from using homework books for some students in his classroom and "send(ing) worksheets home with certain children" so that "the parents (can) work at the worksheets with their kids," there is little evidence of proactive strategies to establish or "keep the connection alive." Asked if he sometimes calls parents for information about their children, he answers: "Not very often." And with regard to learning difficulties, he reports: "If it's academic, I don't call parents, unless there's a real outstanding problem." "Most parents . . . I see are waiting for the child after school and if they are, sometimes they'll drop in if they have a problem or to just chat."

Though Mr. Richards does not have a systematic approach to parent involvement and, with the exception of children who are experiencing academic difficulties typically does not enlist parent participation in student learning, he nonetheless reports that his "experience with parents has always been positive." He also notes that he has become "more conscious of parents . . . more conscious of kids having parents."

Teacher Attitudes Toward Students

General

Mr. Richards reveals little about his general attitudes toward students. He is, however, sensitive to the fact that a child is part of a family unit and as such "shares a value system with that family." The broader the understanding he has of the child and his (sic) family, the more he feels "capable of directing or steering the learning process that's of most benefit to him (sic)."

Student Responsibility

After having spent five years in the business world, Mr. Richards has returned to the classroom with the strong belief in the need for personal responsibility. In his estimation, "responsibility is breaking down in a lot of places." "Not being responsible," he remarks, "is the easiest course to take. If you allow them to take that course, most people will take it. It could be anything from losing your clothes, your coat or your shoes, losing any of your school materials, not getting your homework done, or behaviour in the classroom or hallways between kids . . . I didn't do it. He did it."

When asked specifically whether children can take responsibility for their own education, he responds: "I think a little." At the beginning of the year, however, he notes that students' "sense of self-discipline is not that high." If it were, if he "had a class full of basically responsible children, responsible for their own behaviour and for achieving the objectives mutually agreed to, it (the classroom) would physically look different." Learning activities would be different as well. Learning would take place "in lots of different contexts." There would be a lot more research-based library work, "a lot more creative writing, and a lot more projects."

At the end of the year, Mr. Richards responds more definitively and more positively to the question: "Can children take responsibility for their own education?" The answer is an unqualified "yes." Student responsibility has "increased considerably." This he attributes to his efforts to encourage students "to be accountable for their results." He believes it is important to "teach children responsibility for their actions and their own behaviour."

Teacher Efficacy

Mr. Richards considers himself a "mature person" who is "able to work with the whole range of kids, different abilities." He admits, however, to not feeling affection for every child. When asked whether this is a source of worry, he responds: "I don't worry. I ask questions."

As a teacher, Mr. Richards does not look "for a lot of strong leadership." He comments: "I think I provide my own. . . . I like to make decisions at the classroom level in terms of learning objectives, discipline. . . . "I like to solve problems as best I can. . . . I don't move problems along."

Commentary

As noted previously, Mr. Richards is sensitive to the fact that a child is part of a family unit and as such "shares a value system with that family." He also comments that the broader the understanding he has of the child and his (sic) family, the more he feels "capable of directing or steering the learning process that's of most benefit to him (sic)." However, these sentiments are expressed only in general terms and when measured against the discrepancy between attitudes and practices with regard to parent involvement, one is left questioning to what extent the sentiment is actualized.

A further query comes to mind with regard to the shift in Mr. Richards' willingness to involve parents in instructional matters, which, as noted previously is a departure from a sentiment expressed early in the year when he commented: "I look at teaching for learning as the area in which I work in, and I look for help from parents in behaviour." Whether this attitudinal shift led to behavioural changes in subsequent years is not known as this school's participation in the project was limited to the first year of the study. However, optimism is guarded given the barriers to parent involvement that Mr. Richards spoke of early in the year. "Teachers," he explains, "as a rule get very insular. In the staffrooms they talk among themselves. They talk about teaching, and I don't think parents are particularly made to feel that welcome in that environment." With regard to parent involvement, "teachers, the system," he explains, are the "points of resistance."

Mr. Richards: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Family A has a hearing-disabled older daughter for whom they have had to serve as advocate. The mother explains: "My eldest daughter . . . has been in special schools and we've had a lot of fights with various members of everything—through doctor, teacher, everything. So I suppose I am little pushy on occasion." As a consequence, the mother comments, "you always sort of half expect" a problem when interacting with any teacher. "I'm afraid I have a little bit of a chip on my shoulder as far as teachers go."

Although the hearing-disabled daughter is not the child participating in this study, and although Mother A has "never had any problems with any of the teachers at Radmore school," she nonetheless "tend(s) to walk in (to the school) expecting a confrontation." Furthermore, she reports: "You don't have the sense that the teachers are concerned about helping you out with your child."

Despite her negative experiences, she does attempt to view the world through a teacher's eyes on occasion. "I do feel that in a lot of cases, the teachers are working under a handicap. If you've got twenty odd kids in the class, you cannot give every child the individual attention they need."

Inadequate individual attention for *parents* is also an issue. Mother A is frustrated with how little of either is afforded parents during parent-teacher interviews. Once again, however, she attempts to view this from the teacher's perspective. "I'm wondering, she says, "from the teacher's point of view, if it isn't difficult . . . especially, the first report. In a lot of cases they have have never met you or your husband. You walk in and you are so and so's mother or father. They've got to flip through and 'now what was the particular point they wanted to' . . . , so things could get overlooked from the teacher's stand as well."

When speaking of teachers in general, it is evident that Mother A has her misgivings. However, when asked specifically about the school her

daughter attends, she states that the school has "a reasonably good atmosphere" and that the teachers "are quite good about answering any questions. If I have ever phoned one of the teachers, they always return the call as soon as they can." While not speaking specifically of Mr. Richards, Mother A speaks favourably of all her children's teachers for the current year, stating: "I feel that if I do have a problem, I can go over and talk to one of the teachers—be it that one of the children is having a personal problem or a scholastic problem—either way. "

Mother B also finds the school friendly. There are "lots of concerts to draw the people in (and there is) always . . . a packed crowd." She is also satisfied with how quickly the principal responded to a concern she had regarding vandalism of bicycles. Upon contacting the principal, who is new to the school, she was "thanked" and told that "he would look into it." She reported that the principal followed through on his word: "An announcement was made on the intercom that what kids were doing . . . had better stop." In her experience, this was a welcome change from previous home-school interactions.

Teacher Regard for Students

Mother A has taught her children that "you don't get respect unless you give it." Her message to them is: "You respect me. I'll respect you." "If that (respect) was missing at the school," she postulates, "they would notice." She adds: "I don't think that my kids would like their teachers if they weren't treated with respect." On the basis of what is not said, then, she assumes that her daughter feels respected by her teacher. At the end of the year, her opinions have not changed. She reports that Mr. Richards "listens to their (the students') opinions," and "the kids aren't afraid to talk to him." Given this, she believes that Mr. Richards demonstrates respect for students.

With regard to teacher respect for students, Mother B notes that she "couldn't make a fair statement" . . . because she has not "watched him with the kids." However, on the basis of parent-student conversations that

occurred throughout the year, she believes that Mr. Richards "is trying to be fair." At the beginning of the year, however, she did have some concerns. "A lot of kids seem to get kept in ... like the whole class will get kept in for . . . sometimes up to a half hour"—"usually (because) the class is noisy when they shouldn't be." Like Mother A, she empathisizes with the teacher. "It is very hard to pick out just who is making the noise," thus "the whole class gets kept in." Nonetheless, she is concerned that the delayed departure from school endangers her child to some extent because he is then "walking home (in a rural area) by himself, when all the other kids are already home."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

At the beginning of the year, Mother A reports that "all of (her) kids enjoy school and are willing to . . . do the work, like to do the work." She also notes that "all of my kids like their teachers." At the end of the year, however, there has been a change in her daughter's willingness to work. Attributing the shift in student responsibility to age and peer pressure, Mother A reports that "this class is not good." Although the mother views her daughter as academically capable, she remarks that "if all the other children are thrilled with a C+, she is content and doesn't understand why we are not happy." The mother adds: "This is nothing against Mr. Richards." She attributes her daughter's changing priorities to a shift in friends. Whereas the previous year, this young girl's friends were "both honour students," this year she has a new group of friends who are "into hair, clothes, spending money, and boys."

At the beginning of the year, Mother B views the relationship between teacher and student positively and reports that her son "seems to like his teacher." At the end of the year, she reports that her son "liked (Mr. Richards) better at the beginning of the year than he does now. Hard to say why. I couldn't give an answer. He was really excited to have a man teacher." She does, however, offer one possible explanation for this shift in her son's attitude—her son has come to question Mr. Richards' sense of

fairness. He "does not think that (it) is fair," for instance that "when a couple of kids in the class act up, they all miss their phys. ed."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

At the end of the year, although Mother A reports that she does not know Mr. Richards very well, she describes him as being "very open" and "very nice." She admits, however, that there was a time during the year when she was "definitely annoyed." This relates to the "homework episode" described more fully in the following section.

When speaking of schools and parents in general, Mother B is "sure they (schools and teachers) try to" deal effectively with the problems that parents raise. However, based on previous experience she knows they do not always succeed. "A lot of times, I imagine because of the time factor, they don't get back to the parents and say: 'Well, you know, we've looked at this problem.' " As a consequence, she remarks: "a lot of times parents are probably left wondering." This mother also comments that she "sometimes wonder(s) if bringing up an issue with the teacher will result in retaliation against your child. . . . I imagine it does happen."

Speaking specifically of Mr. Richards, Mother B comments: "From my meeting with (him), I thought he was great and that he looked forward to any involvement that I could give in the classroom." The positive attitude toward parent involvement in the classroom "hasn't always been the case. But it certainly is this year." She explains the negative reference to previous years. "One time I got the impression that the teacher didn't want parental interference . . . She (the teacher) looked at it as interference." By way of explanation, she remarks: "I think she (the teacher) probably felt threatened because there were a lot of parents that were concerned about her teaching methods. . . . I guess any time . . . a person feels threatened, they retaliate."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

At the beginning of the year Mother A reports that her daughter brings home tests that must be signed by the parent and returned to the teacher. Apart from this, there is no other indication of teacher initiated parent involvement. The parents, however, plan to initiate contact themselves. They are concerned that "(their daughter) hasn't been bringing much homework home." "Now, she is a very smart little girl, but at the same time, for grade six, she doesn't seem to be bringing enough home. . . . We don't really want to leave it until parent/teacher night or until the report cards come home, so we're going to give him a call."

It is not clear from the end-of-year interview transcript whether the parents did initiate contact. However, it is clear that the matter was discussed at a parent-teacher conference during which the parents were told that their daughter "was doing fine." "Then," the mother exclaims, "the report card came!" It was then that the parents learned that their daughter had either not been doing her homework at all or had been returning to school with it incomplete. Not surprisingly, the mother comments at one point in the interview; "I wouldn't mind a bit more information coming home." Following this incident, the teacher introduced the homework books to those students who needed to be monitored more carefully. Mother A's daughter was one such child. At the end of the year, the mother reports the use of the homework book and some communication by phone between herself and the teacher.

Mother B reports that Mr. Richards has invited parents to visit the classroom during the teaching day. "I remember a statement made by him that any time that I had any questions that I was to feel free to contact him, that any time that I wished to observe the classroom that I was welcome." The benefit of doing so, she believes, is that parents "would know a bit more about (their) child's day." In this way, when students "talked about things that they had done that day, . . . you (the parent) would understand a little more." She is considering taking advantage of the offer, but before doing so would need to take into account how her son might react. "As kids get

older," she remarks, . . . "you have to consider their feelings, that may single them out in the classroom. . . . at this age, I don't think they ever like to be singled out." She continues: "He might have the idea that the other kids felt that I was there for a specific reason, because he was doing something wrong or wasn't learning as well as he should. If the teacher made an announcement that we're going to have various parents this month come in on set days to observe, that would be different."

At the end of the year, Mother B remarks that "this teacher hasn't followed through on some things." For instance, at the beginning of the year he had informed her that "if he had worksheets that were extra in the areas where he (the son) was having trouble," he would send some home. "But," the mother reports, "there seems to be a problem getting it." Another instance of a failure to follow through was Mr. Richards' unexplained decision to drop a project about which the "the kids were really enthusiastic and ready to go." On the basis of this mother's comments, neither the parents nor the students were offered an explanation for this decision. Mother B notes that they "were going to phone Mr. Richards and find out what happened, but . . . didn't."

Mr. Richards: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Student A, like Student B, describes the classroom as "pretty good." Her assessment is based, at least in part, on the observation that Mr. Richards "jokes around a lot."

Student B describes Mr. Richards' class as being comprised of "rowdy kids and good kids and average kids." Although this student describes it as a "good classroom," he comments that "because the kids are noisy, . . . you end up getting distracted and then you can't concentrate on what the teacher is trying to explain."

With regard to learning activities outside the classroom, Student B believes that Mr. Richards expects parents to help their children with homework. "He'll ask me: 'Did your parents help you or something like that and he is glad that they do because it shows that the parents like to help and they enjoy to help the children doing their work."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

When asked if the school she attends is a good place to learn, Student A remarks: "Well, it is pretty interesting." A probe elicits the following elaboration. "Sometimes when the kids get in trouble or something and you are watching, it is kind of interesting to watch." Further questioning results in the information that "sometimes there are interesting things to learn."

Student B "actually enjoy(s) going to school . . . it is nice." And, because he has been "doing good," he believes that his parents "feel pretty good about it (the school)" as well. Speaking specifically of Mr. Richards, Student B mentions that he thinks his teacher "likes it" when students make suggestions about how things could be done better in the classroom. This way, the student explains, "he will know for the next year or later if he has another chance—that he will know to do that." Student B provides a specific instance of positive student-teacher interaction. He reports receiving a detention that "was not really fair," because "somebody else should have (had one) too." This issue was resolved to his satisfaction. He was able to "settle it out with the teacher" and, as a consequence, "now it is working good."

Count for Something

Student A is unsure whether she counts for something. "Sometimes," she reports. "But sometimes I just . . . I don't know . . . sometimes I guess . . . no not really I don't think. Occasionally, yeah, but not really." When she does feel as if she counts for something, it is as a consequence of getting "praised or something . . . like from a teacher or from the principal or even from a friend." "Then," she says, "I feel really good and it helps me."

Student B is more certain and more positive in his response. Two kinds of experiences cause him to feel that he counts for something: one has to do with helping other students. "When "I'm done my work, a lot of people come up to me and ask me questions of how to do this;" and the other has to do with "helping the teacher lots—marking or something like that." Although the opportunity to help a classmate has a positive effect for this student, he indicates that there is a limit to the amount of peer assistance permitted in the classroom. "Sometimes (Mr. Richards) doesn't (like students helping students), because usually lots of the people don't work. They just sit and talk."

Commentary

For technical reasons, end of year interviews for Students A and B were not available. Therefore, Time 1 and Time 2 comparisons were not possible. However, Time 2 interviews with three other students in Mr. Richards' class reveal that what Students A and B describe at Time 1 are similar in substance to what other students report at Time 2: students continue to perceive Mr. Richards in a favourable light; however, a noisy classroom remains problematic for some. One change that has occurred during the year is that seating assignments have shifted. At the end of the year, desks are no longer in straight rows but rather are arranged to accommodate small group discussion and group projects.

Mr. Roy: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Roy is new to Radmore School and makes reference to this fact several times. He is, however, not the only new member of staff. "Basically, fifty per cent new staff," including the principal, are working together for the first time.

His previous teaching assignment was in a more remote community where the school enjoyed a "stable teaching population," where "parents and teachers (came) to know each other," and where, as a consequence, there was "not this awkwardness" that he is experiencing in his present assignment. The "awkwardness" between colleagues is reflected in his comment that he is "treading very carefully;" that between teacher and parent is associated with the "getting acquainted period when things are awkward on both sides," which resulted in parents "stay(ing) away in droves" at the beginning of the year.

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

In Mr. Roy's opinion teachers who don't get parents "on-side . . . have more trouble with home-school relations . . . because the parents seem cut-off." "If you can get a parent 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."

Speaking more specifically, and with a focus on parent involvement in the classroom, Mr. Roy comments that "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." He notes, too, that "when a parent comes in, that parent is known by more than just their own child. His (sic) friends know the parents and there's a change from within too."

Mr. Roy's attitude to parent involvement is clearly expressed in response to an open-ended question posed at the end of the interview. He states: "The more you can get parents involved in the kid's education, the more the kid gets the idea that education is important because Mom or Dad is involved—someone who's important to them. . . . When a parent takes an interest, it gives added importance to education. It helps."

Parent involvement not only emphasizes the importance of education, it also makes education "easier . . . for the kid, the parent, and the teacher because there's three of you involved now instead of just two. The parent isn't outside looking in. The parent is part of it."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Based on previous experience, Mr. Roy believes that having parents in the classroom is "a nice thing to do," but admits: "I haven't gone out of my way to solicit" their participation in the classroom. He is reactive in this regard, as is evident from the statement that "if they ever ask, they'll be welcome."

He is more proactive, however, when it comes to searching for reasons for undesirable shifts in student behaviour and in keeping parents informed about student progress. Pertinent to the first point, he speaks of "a fairly decent kid" who "got in trouble" and who had "fallen in with this group of kids. . . . I didn't think it was usual so I phoned the mother and asked if anything was going on special."

With regard to student progress, Mr. Roy initiates the use of a homework sheet when a student is falling behind on assignments. Because this sheet must be signed and returned the following day, it is seen to be "an effective way to involve parents." This particular link between home and school is done on an individual basis when deemed necessary and is not a classroom-wide practice.

Mr. Roy reports working one-on-one with parents who call with queries regarding homework assignments and comments on a parent who

came in to ask about a science project that the parent and student could not "get . . . to work at home." Parent and teacher "went down and looked at the book. There were a couple of points that didn't get home .. so now they're back on track." At the end of the year, he also reports that he had regularly met with one parent "before eight o'clock on Thursday mornings . . . to discuss what homework was coming up the following week."

The activities noted above, however, are responses to specific situations and do not represent a systematic approach to parent involvement. Toward the end of the year and as a consequence, at least in part, of attending the teacher workshop conducted as a part of the study, more global activities were introduced. Students, for instance, prepared a class newspaper "just to let them (parents) know what was coming up" each month. It included information about test dates and informed parents of student activities beyond school. A second activity involved an evening informational meeting to discuss a family life program to be taught in class—no parents showed up. Finally, Mr. Roy began a telephone log and contacted parents on a regular basis, regardless of whether he had "something good or bad to say." From Mr. Roy's perspective, parents responded well to the latter initiative and as a consequence "more parents (began) phoning and asking specific questions about assignments."

It is difficult to determine with certainty whether these activities or some other factor contributed to the perceived change in teacher-parent relationships. However, Mr. Roy assumes that "being involved in the program" is at least partially responsible for seeing "more grade six-seven parents than I have before." "I had no parents up till about Christmas. It wasn't until we came back after Christmas that parents started coming in." "They're more willing to phone and talk to you too, seems to me." He remarks: "There was a time when parents didn't figure there was anything they could do to help." This year, however, "parents found out . . . there are concrete things that (they) can do "and they're doing them."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Mr. Roy acknowledges that amongst some teachers there is a "theory that the kids are what they are because of their socio-economic background and there's nothing that we in the school can do to change that." He does not subscribe to this point of view. He reports the words of another teacher on staff who says: "Then we have (Mr. Roy) who thinks we have potential Rhodes Scholars, and he doesn't like to hear us talking differently."

Student Responsibility

Mr. Roy believes that "in grade 7 there's a lot of social things going on. Sometimes they become more important than education." School is not "a very high priority with many of the kids who are here." He speaks of a difference between primary and intermediate in that the "intermediate kids aren't that motivated." As a consequence, while some students are given the opportunity to do their own work, "by far the majority are being very strictly channelled."

By the end of the year, however, "kids have started being selective" with whom they choose to work with. Whereas "at the beginning they got together and worked with their friends, now they're moving away from their friends. If they need help with something and a friend can't do it, they'll go and find somebody who'll help them."

Another way in which responsibility improved over the year is that the students are "better about taking stuff (home) than they were at the beginning." Mr. Roy explains: "Now you have parents phone and find out what it is they've missed. Kids know this. Might as well take it home. They're going to find out anyway." These comments do not suggest that students have internalized responsibility; they do testify, however, to the importance of teachers and parents working in concert to encourage external accountability. Intrinsic valuing of education by students, however, has also improved. Mr. Roy remarks: whereas "during the first term they (the

students) were here for one reasons and I was here for another . . . now we're both working for the same thing."

Teacher Efficacy

At the beginning of the year, Mr. Roy provided more negative than positive comments with regard to satisfaction with professional accomplishments. There were some students he found "really hard to reach." He spoke of one student who told him "the first month of school that his goal was to be the first one kicked out of school this year." Mr. Roy reports that "the same kid told me that school is a waste of time" . . . "and that guy, I just haven't reached." Though Mr. Roy states: "I'm not being as effective as I'd like to be," he believes that he does have an affect on every child, even the student referred to above. "It isn't as great an effect as it is with kids who are really there to learn, but even he's coming around."

Mr. Roy: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

The information noted below is based on interviews with two families. Parents A have a daughter in Mr. Roy's class; Parents B, a son. Although "the secretary really makes (Parent A) feel welcome," he is less comfortable visiting the school this year than in previous years when he "knew a lot of the teachers and the principals." There have been "a lot of staff changes. . . . All the ones (teachers) that I knew, to talk to and feel really welcome have all gone."

Parent B, on the other hand, a father with a step-son in Mr. Roy's class, feels welcome in the school and comments that he and his wife have had "a really good reception over there." He comments on two positive features of the school: the "interesting award programs for the children" and the "social structure at this school," which "is a lot of fun."

This father, who describes himself as "an exceptionally old parent . . . fifty-seven years old," finds it "very difficult . . . to keep abreast of new things, what they're teaching." This, however, does not cause him to feel ill at ease when he meets his children's teachers. He "always feel(s) comfortable meeting with people," because, he explains, "I have the upper hand. I am in politics, so I'm not afraid to speak."

Teacher Regard for Students

Parents A believe that Mr. Roy does respect their daughter. They base their opinion on the fact that "she doesn't get in trouble as much as some of the kids" and that "she seems to be picked to do things occasionally," such as making deliveries to other classrooms or the office.

When Father B is asked to comment on the teacher's respect for students, he remarks that he does not "understand the basis for the question" and that, in fact, he has "never thought of it." After some reflection, he says: "I don't know why they wouldn't." When the same topic is raised at the end of the year, he goes into more detail. "I don't know if you would call it 'respect.' . . . I think it is a professional relationship between thirty-one students and a teacher and if that is respect, then I suppose that's what it is." He goes on to say that his son "is fitting into that middle slot where he is neither dull nor bright, but just trucking down the middle—doing his average thing and not making any waves. I suppose that might earn respect."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Based on previous experience, Father A assumed that his daughter was comfortable approaching her teacher with school-related queries. While discussing a questionnaire item on this topic, however, he learned this was not the case. "I assumed she was comfortable with this one (Mr. Roy)," he comments, "because she was always comfortable with (other teachers)." Nonetheless, he reports, "she seems quite happy to go" to school and "does fairly well. She's not an A student, but she's pretty near a high B."

Father B assumes a positive relationship between student and teacher. He does so based on a positive change in son's attitude toward school that occurred during the year. At the beginning of the year Father B describes his son as "a very defiant child" who "doesn't read very much" and who considers school "a waste of time." To this young man, who is soon to be fifteen years old, school is "dumb." At the end of the year, however, the son is taking more interest in school and whereas at the beginning of the year, he was "a bit belligerent about doing homework . . . he takes it now to his room and does it . . . it is, quite frankly very pleasant," the father remarks. Because of these positive changes in the son's behaviour, the father assumes that "(his son) and his teacher must be getting along better. I say that because (my son) is doing so much better." As a consequence of his improved performance, this young man "has a much more positive attitude towards school." The father is not able to explain this change. "Either his teacher has gotten through to him in the last six months . . . or something personal has happened—I have no idea what has caused it, but it is great." "I'm really proud of him."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Whereas some parents are uncertain about whether the teacher views them as a partner in their child's education, Father A's response is definite. "I don't feel that. No." This father is also one of the very few parents who report feeling excluded from their child's education, indicating that this is the first year he has felt this way. When asked if the teacher missed opportunities to gain parental support, the father replies: "There are times when I think he's missed the boat, but I can't specifically think of when."

Father B, however, feels differently. "Not ever" has he felt excluded from his child's education, and "not ever" has the teacher missed an opportunity to gain his support.

At the beginning of the year Parents A report that the first word that comes to mind when asked to comment on the relationship between parents and teachers is "nothing." They explain: "We just haven't had the contact

with the man. They find Mr. Roy "very, almost stand-offish" and note that they "haven't gotten to know him that well." At the end of the year, things have not changed that much. Although they "have gone up a couple of times and talked to him," they "didn't get too much information." The father remarks: "I thought that would change after he went to that workshop (referring to a project workshop for teachers), but it didn't."

These parents acknowledge that they have not taken much initiative to reach out to the teacher. They cite three reasons for this: one, it is their daughter's last year in this school. "I've got to go on to the next school anyways and that's going to be hard enough," the mother comments; two, the parents "just don't feel comfortable talking to (Mr. Roy);" and three, they question "his beliefs (and) his way of handling situations." Although the father supposes it "is the wrong thing to do," he chooses not to discuss his concerns with the teacher. Rather than "make waves" or create "a conflict" between teacher and student, the father opts to clarify home values with his daughter and leave it at that. Although they elect not to contact the teacher, both parents indicate that they could and would if it were critical for them to do so.

Speaking in general terms about the parent-teacher relationship, Father B describes it as "distant" and comments that "we just don't see each other even though we're working toward a common goal, aside from the interviews that we go to fairly regularly." He adds: "I don't know how on earth you could ever improve that."

After having said this, however, Father B discusses the current teacher of another child in the family—a teacher who seemingly does know how to overcome this distance. This teacher "has been excellent," the father comments. We have "sat down and brainstormed about how we could get this kid to actually do what we wanted him to do." He also speaks of a previous teacher, who, working with the child who is participating in this study, "explained where (his son) was having . . . problems, how to work around the problem. How to get him doing it correctly so that everybody

could understand it on the same wavelength." The father adds: "I don't know if the guy could do any more."

When asked to focus specifically on his interaction with Mr. Roy and to consider if Mr. Roy views him as a partner in the child's education, the father responds: "I've never thought of it specifically. I would be hard-pressed to give a yes or no answer to that." Nonetheless, at the end of the year, Father B holds Mr. Roy is high regard. "From what I see coming home, he is an excellent educator."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

When Father A is asked what prevents him from helping his daughter more than he does, he replies: "Myself, it's basically I don't know a lot of the stuff they're learning nowadays, especially in math." This situation is not helped by the fact that the parents "never hear from (Mr. Roy)," they "never got any correspondence from him," and apart from occasional parent-initiated contact, the only time they have spoken with him was during the "parent-teacher interview after the first report card."

The lack of parent-involvement strategies is also evident in Parent B's suggestion that parents and students would be well-served if the teacher were to send home information that would help parents help their children with mathematics. Showing sympathy for the lot of today's teachers, the father remarks: "God knows those people have got enough to do already without providing information for parents." Nevertheless, he believes it would be helpful "if . . . somehow or another, we could have some fact sheets . . . a companion book that goes with their math book" that would help parents understand the new approach to mathematics instruction.

The end of year brings little change in the parent's perception of teacher-initiated parent-involvement strategies. "I don't think we ever had any serious communication. There may have been notes sent home to do such and such ... or something."

Mr. Roy: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Student A considers the classroom work "challenging" and speaks of having to work hard to keep up. Because she does not have time to finish the work in class, she has homework "every night. I should have about an hour of homework," but "usually I have about an hour and a half to two hours, to two hours and a half . . . My mom doesn't think that is right."

This student finds the classroom itself very noisy. "The teacher yells a lot. It could be quieter. . . . It would be neat if you could go to some place, like your own little place in the classroom where it is really quiet and just like think to yourself, because it is always really noisy in there."

Student B, however, describes the classroom environment as "pretty good." The teachers and the students and the work are fine."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Speaking generally, Student A comments: "I would like to be more friendly to teachers, like teachers be more friendly to kids. Like almost have a teacher that you can talk to because I don't want to go to any teachers in this school and say: 'I don't like the way we have so much work and everything' because I don't feel comfortable doing that."

Student B, on the other hand thinks that the school "is pretty well okay" and reports that his parents, too, "feel good with the school." He also comments that "they like the teacher."

Count for Something

Because she "help(s) a lot around the school," Student A believes she "sort of" counts for something. Student B reports feeling similarly, reporting that he "just fit(s) in." Having "lots of friends in the school" also causes him to feel as if he belongs.

Mr. Simpson: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Simpson is a "fairly new teacher" who describes his workplace "as a tough school" in a "tough feeder area." It is the kind of school "where you could say, God, why do I teach? And it's the kind of place where you think, ah, this is just excellent—depending on how you roll with it." "For a lot of the kids my classroom . . . the things that I set up for them is the most security they have in a day—the five hours I have with them—because they know how I'm going to behave. They know that it's a fairly safe environment."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Mr. Simpson appears to be of two minds with regard to parent involvement. On the one hand, he feels that "if a parent made a commitment to come in every Tuesday or Thursday for an hour in the afternoon and you could count on that, you could work that into it (your schedule). It would definitely help. You could plan around it." On the other hand, he remarks: "I'm still a fairly new teacher and I really like to do it myself. I like keeping organized myself." Perhaps "that will change as I get more experience."

Lack of experience, however, is not the only barrier to parent involvement. Within the school there is a negative history of parent-school relationships. Mr. Simpson reports that "they have had a few parent helpers that they'd rather not have. . . . They've just created more problems than it's worth. I guess we've had some busy-body parents that want to tell teachers how to do their job and think they know what's right and tell everyone how to do it. So instead of a helper they want to be a white hat foreman and that gets to be a problem instead of a help." Parents of this sort would be particularly undesirable to Mr. Simpson who comments: "I don't think that they (parents) should be teaching, because to think that anyone can teach is really a slap in the face of teaching, isn't it?"

Another factor affecting teacher-parent relationships is Mr. Simpson's perception that the parents' "attitude toward teachers here is that we're under worked, over paid. That's their attitude. So that is why, at least that's my belief as to why, we don't have as many parent helpers."

It appears, however, that even if parents were willing to help, their efforts would be resisted. Mr. Simpson explains that there are some teachers in this school who are "very union oriented (and) who don't want parent helpers at all." To the union oriented teacher, "parents helping takes a union job away."

In spite of these obstacles, Mr. Simpson has established some positive teacher-parent linkages. "Some of the parents you get to know quite well," he comments. "It's past that, it is friendly. I think it works pretty good because when there's a hard situation, you can come to the person and you can talk frankly and openly and you know that it's OK. You know that it will be accepted."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Mr. Simpson does not have parents working in his classroom in an instructional capacity. Generally speaking, he does not differ from other project teachers in this regard. He does, however, report attempts to keep parents informed of classroom learning activities by sending home "a math and reading report card once a month." "What I do is staple all the math and reading homework in a big thick package." The parents "have to sign it and when they sign it, they have to look through it and see what they've done for that month." "I can't make them look at it," Mr. Simpson comments, but "I've done my part."

Sending the package of materials home on a monthly basis is one way Mr. Simpson tries to "educate" parents; another way is to respond to their queries regarding assigned marks. "A lot of parents will come in and say: 'Why is this marked wrong?' I try to educate them as to . . . why your

student has a C. This is how your student can get an A. That has been happening with about 2 out of 25 parents."

With regard to making telephone contact with parents, Mr. Simpson's comments are contradictory. On the one hand, he reports: "usually the only time I call parents is either on a really positive note or a really negative note." On the other hand, he indicates that he typically makes contact only when things have gone awry: "Unfortunately, that's the time I contact . . . parents. . . . I keep them (the students) very accountable. I phone the parents all the time to let them know that this was what was supposed to happen and this is what your child did."

Keeping parents informed, however, does not always have the desired effect. "If a student (does) a poor assignment, I . . . have a stamp that says 'parent, please sign.' Although the student is often asked to redo the assignment prior to requesting the parent's signature, Mr. Simpson reports that the student will often "give me the exact same mess again and the parent will sign it without even reading it or checking it, which communicates to the student that I just have to do a mess and I'll get it signed—so the stamp doesn't mean anything." These incidents suggest to Mr. Simpson that "the kids are running the show at home." I "try to get them to get their kids under control, because they (the parents) don't seem to be able to."

Mr. Simpson acknowledges that not all parents are disinterested or unhelpful and that some do come in and let him know that they don't understand what is going on in class. In these cases, he says: "I'll teach them what I do so that when the student takes the work home, they (the student) can't say: 'Well, Mr. Simpson doesn't want that done,' (because) they (the parent) will say: 'Uh huh, he told me that he does.' "

Mr. Simpson recognizes that not all parents are comfortable approaching the school. He understands that the lack of home support may be a result of parents having "had bad experiences in education." Unfortunately, "they reinforce it with their kids." He also believes that for some parents it is

a matter of doubting their ability to help. "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." Mr. Simpson's assessment is that those parents who "are capable, are interested. The ones that aren't, are half interested half not interested."

Teacher Attitudes Toward Students

General

Mr. Simpson "like(s) these kids" and his concern for student well-being is reflected in many of his comments. "I really try to get to know what's going on at home. . . . and I have a fairly good idea . . . For most of the kids I know what happens when this kid takes homework home and I know what happens when this kid takes homework home." In some instances, he remarks, if a "kid gets anything done it's amazing."

He perceives himself to be a "fairly flexible person" and although he has "very structured rules and guidelines, they're bent a million different ways depending on who the kid is and what the situation is." He has adopted the attitude that "as long as they're doing the best they can, that's good enough."

These statements and those included under the section "teacher efficacy" speak of a regard for students. This is not to say, however, that he necessarily trusts them. "The kids," he comments, "are excellent at playing two ends against the middle. . . . They can be at the office and be told something and walk to the class and have a different thing and have both sides confused." He is of the same opinion with regard to home-school relationships. "Most of them (the parents) don't really know what's going on here. In the distance between here and the home, they (the students) can change things around to make it fit the way they want it to fit." Do you think kids often play one end off against the other, he is asked. "Like a piano," he responds.

Student Responsibility

At both the beginning and the end of the year Mr. Simpson is asked whether students can take responsibility for their own education. In the Fall he indicates that students "have to be responsible for their decisions and their actions;" in the spring he replies: "yes and no." Based on his experience with the students in his class, Mr. Simpson believes that he must run a very structured classroom. "If I said this was due next week and gave them a little bit of leeway, nothing would get done."

Teacher Efficacy

Mr. Simpson perceives himself to be growing professionally. "I'm pretty happy with my reading program, and I'm quite happy with my math program." With regard to socials and science, he reports: "I'm still getting better . . . I'm still growing."

"I'm not the kind of person that thinks I know everything," he remarks. "I'm not afraid to ask (if) I'm having trouble with this . . . trouble with that." Feeling comfortable asking for assistance is one reason, he comments, that he is able to say: "I'm becoming a better teacher."

As noted previously, Mr. Simpson reports that this school has "a tougher clientele" than others in the district. One positive consequence is that "what I do in there means more and has more effect." He speaks of "tough kids" and "hard attitudes" that you cannot let "knock you right down and bury you." As long as one is able to "keep it in perspective," then teaching at this school can be satisfying. He admits, however, to feeling as if he is "getting rough around the edges from being hard fisted." Being hard fisted is necessary, "because they (the parents) are not being that (way) at home."

Although working in this environment has its rewards, there are days he admits to feeling "like I'm just beating my head against the wall. We might as well go out and play soccer . . . run them into the ground for the day, because it's not happening in the classroom." Nonetheless, he believes that he "definitely" affects every child and that because he is working with a

"tougher clientele" what he does in the classroom means more and has more effect. Furthermore, he adds, "the kids appreciate it."

Commentary

Little, if any, change in attitudes or practices is noticed between the Fall and Spring data collection periods. This is a difficult placement for a novice teacher who perceives his assignment to be in a difficult school, in a difficult feeder area, with a staff that is antagonistic toward parents for a variety of reasons, and a parent population that is characterized, for the most part, as being antagonistic toward the school and its teachers. While there are indications of some understanding of why parents are not supportive, and while there are indications that this teacher has reached out successfully to some parents, it is questionable, for both personal and contextual reasons, how proactive Mr. Simpson may become in aligning himself positively with parents in a collaborative, rather than hierarchical, relationship—especially with those parents who "if the teacher doesn't get it through to the student," are not able or willing to "take the ball and run and make sure that the child does get it."

Mr. Simpson: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Three parents from Mr. Simpson's class were interviewed: Mother A has a son in his class; Mothers B and C each have a daughter. Mother A reports that she has always found the school "most pleasant" when she has been there—"even when I'm complaining," she adds. "The teachers . . . are open and friendly and willing to discuss things. . . . I haven't had any problems with any of them being unfriendly." She notes that she "used to know some of the teachers better a few years back, or at least I think we did, and they us, probably . . . more on a first-name basis. But there's been some teacher changes, but it isn't a problem. They're friendly and they can't be expected to know who belongs to whom when you go once or twice a year."

Mother C, too, feels welcome in the school. "Most times they welcome the parents to be there—it seems like that anyhow."

Mother B, however, does not feel the same comfort with the school as Parents A and C. She explains: "I was involved in the parent advisory at one time . . . and I did a lot of fund-raising . . . for the school. . . . They had a lot of problems with different principals during that three year time and when it came to the end of the three years, I felt that the work wasn't appreciated. . . . I had made a few little waves in trying to get it complete because once you start you have to complete—on the playground or something like that—twenty thousand dollars. And I just felt a little uncomfortable, because when you make waves to get a project like that done, you can't go into the school and feel comfortable with the principal or someone that you have had a confrontation with. . . . You try to be polite, but it is not the same as the way it was." The current school year, however, has been "a little easier." Nonetheless, Mother B continues to feel that the school's message to parents is: "Just keep out and let us do our own thing, and we'll get along fine."

Teacher Regard for Students

Father A believes that Mr. Simpson does respect his son and, when interviewed at the end of the year, he reports that the respect has grown over the year. "He speaks very highly of (my son)." "I think as he got to know him. . . . I'm not sure you can have respect for anybody to start with. It takes a while to figure out which kids are which." "Or," he questions, "maybe he respected everybody and then lost it. He seemed to anyway."

With regard to his own child, however, Father A is satisfied with the teacher-student interaction. "They give (my son) lots of recognition that he's doing well and that's important to us that he get the recognition. He knows he's doing good. Feels proud. Comes home with all of his work. Says: 'See this? Look, all As and some Bs,' he says. He's really happy and proud. So they must be doing that at school. If he was showing kind of an attitude that

he didn't like or felt bad about some things there, we would know that in quite a hurry, just by his behaviour."

Mother C also speaks positively of Mr. Simpson's regard for students. She believes that he is good for her daughter. "He doesn't let up on her." "He is kinda that strict kind of a teacher," the mother explains. "He catches her every time" she lies to him about her homework being completed. She will say: 'Oh yes, it is done,' and he will look at it and go: 'No it's not.' She does that constantly with him." The mother believes that Mr. Simpson respects her daughter. "I have seen him talk to her about certain things . . . and he never treats her with disrespect. He is firm. . . . I think he respects her as a person."

Unlike Families A and C, however, Mother B is convinced that Mr. Simpson does not respect her child. "He figures (my daughter) complains a little too much and he also says that she has a little bit of trouble socializing in school . . . She stays in at recess and lunch as much as she can so that she avoids anything out in the school yard that is confrontational. And he doesn't like that. . . . He more or less tells me on frequent occasions that it is a privilege for her to be inside and he can take that privilege away anytime he chooses."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Father A believes that "overall," his son "likes" school. "He never misses school . . . (and) we never have to tell him to do his homework. He grumbles about going, but he still goes no matter how he feels." Boredom, however, is a problem. "Very often he says that we didn't learn anything today." They taught me absolutely nothing." The father comments: "I'm not sure what nothing means to him. . . . probably he picked up some things but doesn't recognize it." Overall, however, the father feels that his son "is happier that he's doing better. . . . he's happier about school."

Once again, Mother B reports a less positive scenario. "To be honest, she says that she hates" school. "But she goes. There was a time in January

where she cried for about a week straight and didn't want to go any of the time, but it was more a social thing than a school thing—like a teacher thing." "To be honest," the mother comments, her daughter's discomfort with school is not restricted to the current year, rather "it has been all of the years." For this young girl school "is not easy. It is not fun. It is not enjoyable." Nonetheless, things "improved a little bit" during the latter part of the year.

Mother C's daughter is also one who is not fond of school. This girl, who is described by her mother as "very fidgety" and as having a "very short attention span," "doesn't like" school now and has not since at least grade three. "She has never come home and took out her books and started to work. I have to ask." This student, who repeated grade four, "has mentioned . . . a few times, 'I can hardly wait until I am out of school.' "

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Speaking of teachers in general, Father A comments: "I always feel that school teachers have never really, really experienced life. They've grown up through the school system and they've gone to university and then they've taught school. And they perceive everything as if it, as what they read it in the newspaper. And that really bothers me because our children, of course, right away . . . think a lot of their teachers and they respect their opinions and I believe that they're misled in a number of cases because the media is often not correct in what they're saying. I think as a person working in industry, I could do a lot to tell them what's true and what isn't true."

This general concern was personalized during the school year. Father A explains: "My boy came home and said that because I worked for the pulp industry, I was inhumane. I was destroying the world. The environment was a literal mess because of my actions. So I went over there and asked them which comic book he was reading." The outcome of the teacher-parent discussion was a parent-led "tour of the nursery out where I work to see how we go about reforestation." Prior to this event, the father said, "I had the feeling that the kids thought that I was a murderer . . . because I work

in the forest industry. That's a bit of a sore point." The father continues, "the point I'm trying to make is that a teacher should never be a teacher until he's experienced some walk of life for five or six years after he graduates." The father believes that he made the teacher "feel uncomfortable" when they meet to discuss this issue, "and that was on purpose."

Speaking specifically of his relationship with Mr. Simpson, Father A indicates that he has "no idea" what this teacher thinks about teacher-parent relationships. "He's relatively young and probably doesn't have too much for insight into that type of thing. Probably trying to do the best job he can, but pretty young." In sum, "there isn't much of a relationship."

Mother B's discomfort in the school extends to the classroom as well. When asked if she feels welcome in the her child's classroom, she responds: "No." She explains: "Me and the teacher have not agreed on a couple of points. . . . We don't see eye to eye on things, and that is okay, but you always try to communicate and keep it open." From this mother's perspective, however, keeping the lines of communication open is difficult. To her, it feels as if "I have to be three weeks in advance and make prior warning and stuff like that."

Another grievance involved a homework assignment to be completed over the Easter break. "It was to be done—no exceptions, no other. There was two hours a day for the whole holiday break. We fought with (our daughter) all week to do this homework. . . . She got into school on Monday. She had it done. He asked how many people had it done and about fifteen hands didn't go up and he said, 'Well, you've got until tomorrow.' " The mother was displeased with this and phoned Mr. Simpson to discuss the issue. She suggested that students who had completed the assignment on time be awarded bonus points. The teacher responded: "No, we do not give out bonus points for having it done early." The mother then asked: "What are you teaching our kids? You lay down the law and then you change your mind at the last moment—especially when we had to really push this to get it done over the holidays."

In sum, the mother feels that the relationship between herself and the teacher has deteriorated over the year. She does not feel comfortable meeting with him and she assumes that "he is thinking 'not you again.' "

Mother B points out that the negative commentary is not meant to suggest that there have not been good teachers over the years. When her children have experienced good teachers, she remarks: "I made sure they (the teachers) knew it. I sent them thank-you cards and I made sure that they knew that they had done an excellent job. . . . Even though other teachers have had problems with me . . . in the back of their mind they think, well, she can't be all that bad, I made it through with her."

Mother C is asked if she feels welcome in the classroom. She responds: "Last year for sure . . . This year, it is a different teacher. He wanted to try some things on his own." "But we're helping him more." She adds: "He has realized that he can't do it just by himself. . . . I think he is having trouble. Like he has tried all the different things that he has done and now he needs us to help him, I guess." Although this mother speaks positively of the ways she and Mr. Simpson have worked together during the year, at the end of the year she continues to "get the sense . . . that he figures he can handle it himself better." She goes on to say that she feels "pesty to be there all the time. I would like to be that nosy (as other parents she has referred to), but I don't know if that is what the teacher wants. . . . He says anytime come in or whatever . . . (but) you don't get that feeling, you know. . . . like you feel like you are checking up on him or checking up on her."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Mother A reports a change that occurred during the year. "They keep sending home . . . the work, lots of work and tests and things so we can look at it." She is pleased with this practice. "That's good," she says. "We get to look at (our son's) work more so than we used to because he brings them all home. We know how he's doing." This mother, who has daughter in grade ten as well, comments that no previous teacher has "ever regularly sent the work home . . . so that we can see exactly what he's doing." She adds: "We

have to sign it that he's done it and send it back so that they know that we actually looked at it." She admits that it is possible that "they may have been sending it before, but he wasn't doing so well and he never brought it home. Maybe. I don't know—but, he's doing it now and I'm proud of it."

Mother B also comments on the teacher's practice of sending schoolwork home for parental review. "I get information from (my daughter's) teacher. Just a standard form where he attaches all of their past work, and it says at the bottom that if you want to have a discussion with me about anything on these marks, to please notify me." This, however, appears to be the only proactive parent involvement strategy at work. Other interactions are reactive. For instance, Mother B visited the classroom to ask for the teacher's assistance in understanding a math assignment. "He sat down with me and showed me . . . that was great." "Then I requested an envelope with the test in it with all of the answers on it so that I can review the Math for next year and I can review it with her to make sure she got it. I haven't seen it yet."

Despite the practice of sending schoolwork home and receiving help from the teacher, when asked if her child's teacher sees her as a partner or team member in her child's education, she responds: "Definitely not . . . it is a strong 'no.' " She gives the following reasons for this response: "When I ask a question, he takes it as criticism and when I have a constructive solution, he doesn't act upon it. And he asks for the information, he asks for input and then when you give it to him, he doesn't act on it, and that has happened on a couple of occasions."

This parent is one of the few who feels that she has been excluded from her child's schooling. She explains: "My daughter came home and more or less told me: 'Mom, I'm afraid that Mr. Simpson is going to make my life miserable if you go in and say anything about how he does school anymore. Like if you go in and say anything, Mom, then I'm going to be on the hit list and so lay off.' And I did. I backed right off and I thought that my child isn't going to suffer because she feels uncomfortable with the teacher's attitude toward me. . . . That made me feel really alienated. I thought, my

god, when you walk in the school and you know the animosity is there, you don't want to fuel it, you want to clear the air, get it done and over with and just carry on."

Mother C's remarks mirror a sentiment Father A reported: "When they're doing well, you don't get a lot of calls." Mother C's experience is with the bad news call. "When he phoned," Mother C reports, "he more or less said that he doesn't know what else to do. . . . I guess it is desperation on his part." Whatever the reason, Mr. Simpson is now "letting me in on what they are suppose to be doing and what he expects and stuff like that."

This mother considers Mr. Simpson "very helpful." "I can go to him any time and ask him exactly what needs to be done and what he is doing and what he expects. . . . He will explain what she is supposed to be doing." She continues, "Once in a while I phone just to see how she is doing, because I haven't heard from him in a long time or seen any work come home."

Although Mother C is pleased with the amount of information she now receives, she relates a story indicating how helpful it would be if the teacher were to share with parents the criteria to be used to evaluate student learning activities. The mother speaks of a homework assignment that she "figured . . . was like a book report." When reviewing her daughter's homework, she thought it "should have more information on it . . . she (the daughter) didn't have hardly anything written down." "I phoned him . . . wondering when it was going to be sent back, and he said he was really impressed by the neatness in her work and then that made me realize, well, that is what he was looking for." Not knowing this was the intent of the task, the mother "was giving her (the daughter) quite a hard time about what's this, there is nothing here, like, you are going to get a bad mark"—this exchange is especially unfortunate in a situation where the daughter "really resents" her mother monitoring her schoolwork. "She really resents my interfering."

Toward the end of the year, Mother C reports that the relationship between parent and teacher has strengthened during the school year. "I think we understand each other better." "At the first of the year, Mr. Simpson seemed that he wanted to try to work with (our daughter) his own way to get her to do the work he wanted and it didn't work and then we had to work together . . . he finally phoned . . . it has changed now . . . he will give me a note or phone or whatever if he is having any different problems or whatever. So, he is working with me more now than at the beginning of the year. . . . He realized that he had to work along with us, because we have to enforce what he says. It doesn't work with him just trying to do the disciplining."

Mother C reports that her daughter responded "very well" to parents and teacher working collaboratively. "She has slacked recently, but she has picked up again as soon as I started checking it again for about a week." "She likes to do it (monitor her homework) herself. . . . But if she knows that Mr. Simpson is going to phone the minute she starts doing it again, she can't get away with it."

Mr. Simpson: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

Student A finds the classroom as "just a little loud," but nonetheless describes the learning environment as "good." His friend, however, "hates it because he always gets his assignments ripped up." Student A is of the opinion that school has become easier during the year. "At the beginning of the year, you sometimes get homework. And now, I don't even get homework. I don't even really get work. Today it only took me to do work they were supposed to do in an hour and a half only about ten minutes." This student reports that he had homework "only twice this year." He indicates that parents are not asked to help their children with homework, but, he adds, "they help me anyways."

Unlike her classmates, Student B "like(s) the classroom really a lot" and thinks the teacher is "really nice to talk to." Student B does not volunteer information about the school or the classroom as a place to learn, but when asked to comment on the school as a place to do academic work, she describes it as "good." Unlike Student C, who indicates that students are not allowed to talk to one another, Student B reports that they "sit in groups . . . and work together. That way, we can help one another." For this student, school is "sometimes" stimulating "but not very often." Nonetheless, she and her friends "do all their work and they go home and study."

When describing the classroom learning environment, Student C comments: "If you do something wrong, he'll get really mad and give you a paragraph and detention. Otherwise, it's good." She does, however, describe it as a "pig-sty" and refers to it as "creepy." This young girl believes it is the teacher's job to make sure that students learn. "But," she observes, "there are twenty-five of us and there are a lot of questions. . . . We try to help each other, but he won't allow it." When asked if she would speak to Mr. Simpson about how much work he assigns, which she believes is excessive, she responds: "No, because he will just yell at you."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Student B "like(s) the school and everything they have there." Consistent with her mother's comments, Student C reports: "I don't like school." She does, however, respond positively to some teachers—in particular, the librarian, who "is really nice." Her classroom teacher, however, is another matter. "I just don't like him. Nobody in our class does. There might be one person, but they must be 'sick in the head.' Last year nobody liked him." She mentions that one of her friends left the school "not too long ago because of our teacher. Most of my friends don't like him much."

Her perception of the school, however, is different. "Not very many people like the classroom, but the school—most of them like the school." Her parents, however, do like Mr. Simpson. "They like my teacher . . .

because he is strict. I have never had a strict teacher ever and this is the first one and they like it."

Count for Something

Student A does not feel that he counts for something in his classroom or his school. "If I wasn't there, they wouldn't care. Only to my friends, that's about it." He explains: "Can't do anything special just good at school. That's about it." He reports that Mr. Simpson "does not even ask if you are doing anything wrong. He just gives you a paragraph and he makes us have detentions, even if there was only one person—so that all of us get into trouble. . . . At the beginning of the year, he only made you make up your own paragraphs now he makes us do 400 word ones. . . . He has them on a piece of paper. He has about ten of them—one for each thing."

Like Student A, Student C feels that "most of the kids in the school don't count for anything. . . . I don't feel it," she says.

Mr. Vickers: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Vickers is an experienced teacher and, although not new to the school, it is his first year teaching grade seven. For some students, this is the third year they have been in his class.

He describes the school as "enjoyable" and "warm" and speaks of there being a "spirit of friendliness. It isn't just staff, it's staff, students, parents." The philosophy of the school, which is small and rural, is that "each and every child will be given every opportunity and every bit of help to become the best that they can." "I should have gone" by now, he comments, but "I have no intention of leaving."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

Mr. Vickers appears ambivalent with regard to parents and parent involvement. On the one hand, he comments that parents should be told "they are welcome;" they should be made aware "that this is their school;" and they should "be invited in to take part in classroom activities." On the other hand, he indicates that "parents have the silly idea that it's their school and that we work for them." He says as well that "a lot of parents come in along the line that I know what to do and I'm going to do it."

These comments need to be measured against his response to an open-ended question posed at the end of the interview. "It's my personal belief," he says, "that teachers became too professional. (They became) too quick to lock the parents out because, after all, they were the professionals and the parents weren't." "A lot of the problems we have today are with public relations," he continues. They "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?"

From what has just been said, it would seem reasonable to assume that Mr. Vickers does not view the separation of teacher and parent as ideal. He then questions, however, the benefits of parent involvement. "I

have read nothing to show that parent involvement is a very positive thing? . . . Do we really know? . . . Maybe it is. I just haven't read anything. However, he provides the very evidence he suggests is lacking. He speaks of the importance of parents being interested in education and comments: "I've yet to have a parent come in who hasn't walked away with a more positive aspect toward the school."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Although Mr. Vickers has welcomed parents into his classroom in the past for both observational and instructional purposes, "this year," he reports, "I haven't welcomed or not welcomed." This "is my first year at the grade level," he explains, and "I'm not too clear in my mind just what parents can do at this level." He does, however, have a "lady coming in and doing arts and crafts." But "that's about the extent of it."

With regard to keeping parents informed, he looks upon the homework book as serving this purpose. He reports as well that "if someone is having individual problems in an area, I may call the parent and say we need to work with this and this and this." "Sunshine calls" are also used to communicate with parents. The strategies he discusses, however, seem almost off-hand and on the basis of the information he provides, it appears that no comprehensive parent involvement program is in place. Given the small, close-knit community in which the school is situated and given that parents are in the school on a regular basis, perhaps such a program is deemed unnecessary.

Teacher Attitude Towards Students

General

The comments noted recorded under "student responsibility" create an image of a teacher who cares about his students and who attempts to nurture their independence. He enjoys witnessing growth and self confidence and tells the story of finding a "petition on my desk signed by every kid in the class." For understandable reasons, the students were under the wrong

impression that a favourite grade seven activity, making gingerbread houses, would not occur that year. Students took matters into their own hands, which "was wonderful," according to Mr. Vickers and represents "exactly what I want" to see happening."

Mr. Vickers takes pride in the parental perception of his and his colleague's attitude to students. He predicts that although parents would not always agree on how certain things are done in the school, he is convinced that they believe that "he and the others on this staff all really care about kids."

Student Responsibility

Mr. Vickers expresses no doubt that children can take responsibility for their own education. However, he adds: "They have to be taught the skills. It isn't fair to say: 'You are now thirteen and you have to (be responsible). . . . First, they have to be taught or shown that this is possible. Secondly, they have to be given a chance to practice these skills." To this end, Mr. Vickers introduced homework books in which students are to record their homework and the name of a "learning buddy" whom they can call should they need assistance. Encouraging students to count on one another as resource persons is another strategy intended to increase student responsibility.

Teacher Efficacy

All teachers were asked if they help parents to learn things that make it possible for the parent to assist their child with schoolwork. No project teacher answers as positively as Mr. Vickers: "Yes, all teachers have."

With regard to his work with students, Mr. Vickers' assessment of his ability to succeed with every student would be described by some as tentative and by others as realistic. While his goal is to reach all his students, "I have to admit," he says, "there are some . . . that at the end of the year we realize that we both got through the year, but I certainly wasn't the best teacher for

them." However, generally speaking, "I honestly believe there's very few that I haven't had a good effect on."

Commentary

There are no apparent differences in attitudes or behaviours between Time 1 and Time 2, with one important exception. Many times over teachers in the upper grades of elementary school declare, as did Mr. Vickers at the beginning of the year, that "you have to be careful (about involving parents, particularly in the classroom) because around grade seven a lot of the kids don't want Mom or Dad there." This is a perception, on the part of many teachers and some parents, that constitutes an important barrier to family-school liaison.

By his own admission Mr. Vickers had bought in to this myth. At the end of the year he realizes the artificiality of this assumption. "I was quite surprised, at the grade seven level I thought there might be a little 'I don't want my mommy here.' But they (the students) really enjoy it and, of course, if the parents think that school is important, there is a far greater chance that the children" will too.

There are other interesting points to explore further here. For instance, Mr. Vickers comments that "there's no honour roll and stuff like that. It just defeats (the) purpose" of the school's focus on building student self-esteem." One wonders if there is a link between this statement and the fact that Mr. Vickers seldom mentions academic learning activities or academic performance. The exception is when he reports that student scores are "consistently higher than average results on district tests." This one reference to academic outcomes is reported at the school level. Nothing of this sort is discussed at the level of the classroom.

Further to this, as noted previously Mr. Vickers responds very positively when asked if he has helped parents to help their children learn. By way of example he mentions a teacher-parent interaction that focuses not on academic concerns but rather on a relationship issue between mother and daughter.

Mr. Vickers: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Parents A describe Valleyview school and the community in which it is situated as places where "everybody knows everybody." They report that the school encourages families to "please feel welcome" through newsletters and teacher invitations to attend various school functions.

Mother B also feels welcome in the school even though she considers herself "not well educated" and, because of this, does not feel comfortable meeting with teachers. "The school is friendly. The teachers are very friendly. They greet you when you walk in with 'How are you today.' " This compares favourably to the family's experience in a previous school, where, after kindergarten, "it was like 'we don't have time for you.' . . . It was the feeling you got, you know."

Mother C, a teacher herself who is presently at home raising children, also reports feeling welcome in the school. "They always make you welcome . . . go into the staffroom and have coffee." "They encourage us to participate in the classroom." Newsletters, too, she reports, convey a welcoming a message. "They're always saying come in and visit. . . . If you have any questions, don't wait until it's too late, just phone . . . and here we are." This school, she comments, "does a lot of extra activities for them (students). It's not a drag going to that school." She adds: "We've had excellent teachers all the way (through) that school. We've never had the experience where we've had to deal with someone that wasn't there mainly for the children. . . . All the teachers at Valleyview School seem to be there not just because it's a job, but because it's a job they want to do."

Teacher Regard for Students

Based on their experience, Parents A believe that Mr. Vickers cares about his students. They report an incident that demonstrates the teacher's willingness not only to listen to parent concerns, but to adjust behaviours to meet the needs of the student. The father explains: "I know (Mr. Vickers)

personally. He goes to the same church as I do. He has a very dry sense of humour and (our son) is quiet and kind of shy. (Mr. Vickers) would say things to him that would try to egg the kid on to do better or try harder. It would make (our son) feel embarrassed and hurt and cry within himself and cause stomach aches . . . I realized that he couldn't take that . . . so I talked to him about it and he didn't realize that it was bugging him because (the student) never said anything. As soon as he realized, he cut it out."

With regard to their own son, Parents A believe that Mr. Vickers "respects him and likes him as a person. But," they add, "I think it would be hard to when you can't seem to get a kid to do something for you." They believe that the respect he shows their child he shows to "all his students in his class. Once or twice a year he invites his whole class over to his house for supper, maybe for hotdogs and a movie. Not for any special reason. He just does it. Sometimes it's all the boys. Then it's all the girls. I think that's part of respect. . . . He just likes all of his kids."

Mr. Vickers "realizes that every kid is an individual and they all grow at different rates. You have to know where the child is, too. He was a kid that dropped out of school in grade eleven and went back . . . so he understands that different kids mature at different levels."

Although Parents A speak positively of Mr. Vickers regard for students, they do question whether his approach to student responsibility is the right one for their child. Their son "will only give you exactly what he has to do to pass." He needs to be pushed. Teachers like Mr. Vickers, who "lay out the work and say okay students this is where you have to be, this is what you have to do," do not bring out the best in this boy. As a consequence, "his marks have gone from C+'s and B's to C's and C-'s."

Mother B's reaction to Mr. Vickers' approach to student responsibility is more positive. From her perspective, "he's trying to make them responsible for their own grade." He "makes her feel like you're not going to get it done and I'm not going to phone your mother about it, but it's going to show up on your report card." The mother reports: "I don't hear about her

homework. I don't know that she even has homework, now, but she has to do it." Mr. Vickers' approach appears to be the right one for this child. "Now she goes down to her room where it's quiet, no TV on, and she does her homework. And I don't even know she's got homework."

Mother B also comments on the social aspect of the teacher-student relationship. "They had two pizza nights at their house. The whole class went to their house. He had a pizza night and videos." She continues, Mr. Vickers "always makes the kids feel real good. He makes everybody feel real individual." Speaking specifically of her own daughter, she comments: "When he talks to me about her he makes her very much an individual. It's not like she's part of a crew. He speaks very individual about them and he really rewards them."

Mother B's assessment of Mr. Vickers is captured in the following quotation: "I think he's just the greatest teacher. . . . as far as Grade Seven, I wish that every kid could see him because he really all of a sudden broadens them, he makes them feel like they're individuals and people and he's just a teacher from a different cup of tea. He's just really good."

Mother C is similarly impressed with Mr. Vickers' attention to individual needs. "With the amount of students he has, he's doing as much as he can to meet their individual needs. . . . He shows an interest in them, each as an individual." She adds: "I've never heard him say anything negative about a child. He's always looking for the best. I've heard parents make a snide remark about their child, and they're just joking, but he never lets them get away with it. He always says something positive about the child so the parent draws up short and thinks, yeah, I know."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Father A comments that his son "doesn't really care for" school. "To him, it's just a big bore. Something he has to do. The sports is what he likes. To tell the truth, he's exactly the same as I was."

According to Mother B, her daughter "moans and groans about going" to school, but "she likes it." "She rarely misses a day." Her comments regarding her daughter's reaction to Mr. Vickers, however, are without reservation. The students in general "really admire what he says." And her daughter in particular "looks up to Mr. Vickers. He is a great example." "Emotionally," the mother adds, "he has been just great. . . . He doesn't just give them the work . . . he gives them the time. (My daughter) feels very free to ask him for help at any time." As well as the emphasis on the affective, Mother C also believes that there is an emphasis on academics. "The school is very high on the academic," she explains. "The students are always getting good marks. If there are any government tests, they do extremely well."

According to Mother C, her daughter has "always enjoyed her teachers. She's never had teachers she didn't like." As for attending to homework, the mother comments: "Most of the time, I don't even know that she's got homework. She'll come in and go to her room and she's doing it. . . . She does her homework without any complaining. She just gets right to it. . . . She always strives to get good marks. I know a lot of that is because we expect her to. She's trying to please us, but I think she would feel uncomfortable if she wasn't doing the best. She likes to be the top of the class."

As for student regard for her teacher, Mother C reports that the students "really like him. . . . I think just the way he will give them a hug. . . . Students from other classes come to him for . . . comfort because they knew he was there . . . give them a hug . . . a lot of them probably don't have hugs at home. . . . He said to them . . . he would never stop giving them a hug if they need it."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Parents A have never felt excluded from their child's school. They explain: "The teachers have been really open to suggestions or hints about coming into the class or helping with things. And I think they really welcome it because, as I say, they have had large classes, split classes ever since (our

son) was in Grade One. It makes it really hard for the teacher. The more parent help they get, the easier it is to devote time to kids that need the help."

Father A reports an incident that demonstrates a willingness for the teacher to work collaboratively with parents. The father was wanting to take his son out of school for three days so that they could holiday together. "I kind of talked to him (Mr. Vickers) for over half an hour on the phone. . . . He kind of left it up to me to take him out of school. He wasn't doing too good at that time. He said he didn't really want him to, but he said he wanted him to in another sense because for the fact that he could go and spend some time with me, like on a one-on-one basis. I was away all summer and didn't get much time with him this year. So I took him. . . . He (Mr. Vickers) said he'd just make him stay in at lunch time. . . . and (he) made sure he had homework to take with him."

When speaking of parent-teacher relationships in general, Mother B comments: "More communication is necessary, I would say. . . . If you're a working parent, you can't have a really close relationship with the teacher because school is from nine to three and that's not going to change. You can't spend your half hour or hour lunch running to the school to see how things are going."

However, when speaking of Mr. Vickers specifically, she speaks more positively. She believes that he sees her as a partner in her child's education. "Since I've been going in" to the school, "he'd say, like she just did this or we're working on this and he's very. . . . Like I find that a lot of what he's stressing is responsibility with the kids, so he's let me know that. So we sort of work on the same lines there, like, you be responsible or you don't get the privileges. If your work's not done, you don't get to go." She feels her liaison with Mr. Vickers is "not strictly the education part of it" but rather on "basic points of life." "Emotionally," she says in another part of the interview, "he has been just great."

As noted previously, Mother B does not consider herself well educated. Because of this she is uncomfortable talking with teachers. Mr. Vickers, however, is an exception. "He is probably the first teacher that I have actually related to comfortably." This is a feeling that has grown over the year. The mother explains: "I feel like I can talk to Mr. Vickers now, whereas at the beginning of the year I wouldn't have felt like that. You know what I mean, you have to get to know them."

Mother C also believes that Mr. Vickers views parents as partners in their children's education. This message is conveyed "mainly from when we have a parent teacher interview, just the regular one. He is so careful to explain everything that they're doing so that we know and if there is anything that we can do at home with her, he'll mention it." Furthermore, "he's just so welcome to talk to you when you're in the school. He shows a lot of eagerness to know as much about the child as possible." This is in contrast to another teacher she encountered in the same school who commented that "parents were there to feed and clothe their children and to give them a lot of love at home, and she was there to teach them. Parents weren't expert at teaching, so they probably wouldn't be much of an assistance to her. This is the same teacher that didn't like the homework. . . . Parents should be at home nurturing their children and not interfering with their education."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

One way Mr. Vickers keeps parents informed of student progress is by calling them at home. Mother A reports: Mr. Vickers "will phone me up every once in a while and he'll say that he is going to keep (our) son behind and make him finish his work for the day. . . . Then he'll give him a ride home periodically, which is good because I asked him to do that—keep him in at lunch time, after school because he has to wait an hour for the bus. He has lots of time to catch-up on stuff if he missed it. So he (Mr. Vickers) does now."

Mother B mentions another parent involvement activity, which she described as "great." We went for the morning and helped make gingerbread houses . . . parents and children work(ing) together . . . right beside each other. . . . I thought that was great." When it comes to academic learning activities, however, Mother B's comments suggest that more help is warranted. It would be helpful, she suggests, if teachers were to "call and say . . . we are working on this and this is what our aim is and this is what we are after. And if they told me a little bit more of what they wanted, then I could probably help her easier."

Mother C, however, believes that she does get the information she needs to help her child at home. Although Mr. Vickers has not adopted practices that keep parents regularly informed on a weekly basis, this mother nonetheless feels that she gets what she needs at the parent-teacher interview. It must be noted, however, that both Mother C and her husband are not only university educated but are teachers themselves. Furthermore, the father is currently teaching a grade seven class.

Commentary

It is interesting to note that although Mr. Vickers does not emphasize academics during the interview, parents report a number of instances that demonstrate teacher concern for student learning. This, however, does not negate the observation reported earlier that Mr. Vickers places great importance on the affective side of student life. Parents do not fail to notice this and comment upon it positively.

Mr. Vickers: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

According to Student A, the classroom learning environment is "quiet" and "good." Student A reports that it extends to the home, as well, on those occasions when Mr. Vickers "phones my mum and tells me to get my mum to help me" with some aspect of homework.

Student B also speaks favourably of her classroom, which she likes better than classrooms she has been in at another school. At Valleyview School, "the teachers are nicer. The kids are nicer." And, she says: "If I have a problem or something, the kids understand." Furthermore, the teachers "care about if you have your homework and if you are having trouble." The "classroom," she says, "is good enough for me."

Student C notes that Mr. Vickers "usually uses fun ways of learning." He also listens to student concerns. By way of example, Student C reports: "When Mr. Vickers says we're not going to do things . . . sometimes I figure we should. Like when he said we weren't going to do the gingerbread houses, I got a petition and we did the gingerbread houses."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Student B does not speak directly to the topic of student regard for the classroom teacher. However, given the comments reported above, it would seem reasonable to assume that she responds favourably to Mr. Vickers, as do her parents, who consider him "a good teacher."

For Student C and her friends, school is "like a second home."

Count for Something

All three students feel as if they "count for something." Each gives different reasons for feeling this way. For Student A it comes from obtaining the "highest marks" in the class, serving as team captain of the wrestling team, and being "pretty good at basketball." For Student B it comes from "friendship. Lots of people are really friendly." And for Student C, it is a result of people asking her for help and assisting Mr. Vickers with the computers. Being "on the volleyball team, the basketball team, and just helping the teachers" also contribute to Student C's positive feelings.

Mr. Whiston: Teacher Self Report

General Comments

Mr. Whiston has been at Walnut Grove School for six years. It is a "marvellous school to teach in" and, because there are only two hundred students, "with a little effort on your part you can darn near pretty well know everybody." You get to know brothers and sisters and, "from my point of view, that's a really happy situation to work in."

Teacher Attitude: Parent Involvement

The teacher-parent relationship is "very important" to Mr. Whiston, and he believes that "the onus is on the teacher to make the parents feel welcome." He admits, however, that "there is not a whole lot that is really done about it." He gives two reasons for this situation. One, parents and teachers "don't see (each other) very much for that relationship to grow;" and two, "it's hard for people to see teachers as real people." They "have very high expectations of teachers and if they find a little (flaw), it shatters it. A lot of people can't deal with the shattering of teachers."

Based on Mr. Whiston's experience, these difficulties are not insurmountable. He speaks of two activities that brought teachers and parents together very effectively. The first was the construction of an adventure playground. "That was a marvellous thing for teachers to go out there and dig holes and screw bolts with other parents. Parents can see you as a regular human being, that you're not perfect, and that you can laugh and make mistakes."

Another "parent-teacher builder" is the hobbies program, which occurs every other year. Each Wednesday afternoon for one month "the school sort of divides up into various little classes of about eight students, and between parents and teachers there's a hoard of activities that happen: batiking, calligraphy, flower arranging, sweatshirt making." At the conclusion of the scheduled activity, parents and teachers often "spend half an hour or forty-five minutes . . . talking about this funny thing or that funny

thing." "Unfortunately," he says, these conversations are "not always (with) the parents of the children you have in your own class." Nevertheless, "if you build up a good relationship it sort of spreads out, oozes out on the rest of them."

Although Mr. Whiston speaks of the importance of bringing students and parents together, he is of the opinion that "some of the children don't want their own parents in there (the classroom). They just don't." He reports elsewhere in the interview, however, that "when parents have been in, they've fitted in really well. A lot of the kids feel very special toward them and treat them like another mother or another father." With regard to children responding to their own parents being in the classroom, he says: "The children are really pleased to see their parents. I think they are genuinely happy."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

Mr. Whiston reports that parents have come in to talk about their careers, trips they have taken that are pertinent to an area of study, or to teach students how to do a particular craft. In his estimation, however, he does not "have a lot of parents in . . . to work with kids," nor does he "solicit very much parent help." One reason for this is that in the past "parents haven't always been positive, and I've had a few negative things (occur)." As a consequence, he has become "very, very careful about which parents" he chooses to work with. He continues: "grade seven kids are—what's a nice way of putting it—a bit rebellious, and parents haven't appreciated it, and they've sort of reacted to the kid. And sometimes the reactions aren't always positive. I don't want to expose the kids to it unnecessarily."

While having parents in to the classroom may not be desirable from Mr. Whiston's point of view, he does engage parents in other ways. For instance, if he senses that a child is upset, he calls the parent(s) to determine if there is something that he should be aware of. He will also call the parent(s) if a child needs "a little more encouragement in reading" or to let

a parent know that a child has been hurt at school. "Sometimes, he says: "I phone just to say that they are doing fine."

Teacher Attitude Toward Students

General

Mr. Whiston comments that "every school has kids with a couple of problems, but generally the kids are a very nice lot."

The extent to which he focuses on student concerns is expressed in several comments. For instance, as a parent himself, he is "amazed, just from listening to (his) own kids," to learn "the sort of things that teachers don't realize . . . set kids off—just by the fact that they didn't say hello, how are you this morning, nice new jacket." "Just the little things that you do with them, they remember . . . forever."

His concern is also reflected in the kind of questions he asks of himself. "You do worry," he remarks. "Are you doing the right thing? Am I pushing this person enough? Am I pushing this person too much? Finding the right way to deal with each student is consistent with Mr. Whiston's interest in "empowering" children." His intent is to make them feel that anything they do is good." This gives them the "power and confidence to try things that they might be a little hesitant about trying."

The wish to be sensitive and the wish to empower are consistent with his description of the kind of teacher he would like for his own child: one who is "warm, . . . sensitive, . . . and aware of the individuality in the students;" and one who "looks for strengths, maybe ignores their weaknesses, or plays them down. I'd like that in a teacher."

Student Responsibility

Mr. Whiston is of the opinion that "most of the time" children can take responsibility for their own education. In his opinion, the "overwhelming majority are (sic) willing to assume responsibility."

Teacher Efficacy

Worrying about students is "an occupational hazard," according to Mr. Whiston. "I'm sure a lot of teachers wake up at three in the morning and ask: 'Am I doing the right thing?' " Although he attempts to reach every child, he is not always successful. Further to this, he comments: although "I've been teaching for twelve years, I'm still constantly amazed at what I don't know."

In spite of this, he believes that he has had an important impact on the lives of many students over the years. "I've had lots of feedback from students who've said: 'Do you know all this floor hockey you did with me? I really liked that, and I went on to become a P.E. instructor.' " "It's amazing when you talk with older students, the things they dredge up that I've long ago forgotten. They said, 'you know, that was really good.' "

The comments above reflect Mr. Whiston's thoughts at the beginning of the school year. In the spring, however, Mr. Whiston is less buoyant. He can appreciate why teachers worry about whether they are reaching all their students. "I feel that way myself," he admits. Having worked with thirty-one students over the course of the year, having "spent a lot of time running around . . . trying to hit the whole gamut of skills in the class," and feeling that he didn't get to them all has had its effects.

Commentary

It is interesting to note that although Mr. Whiston indicates he is "interested in the idea of encouraging parents to spend more time with their kids," there is no parent involvement program in place that would routinely and predictably have this effect. Although he "sometimes" phones parents just to say that the (students) are doing fine," the use of the term "sometimes" causes one to question the consistency with which such calls are made as does the admission that "usually, those are harder to get around to."

While it cannot be claimed that parent involvement practices are non-existent, it is apparent that parents of children in Mr. Whiston's class are not nearly as well or as regularly informed about student learning activities or progress as are those in Ms. Quinton's class. Neither do the strategies noted above address what Mr. Whiston identifies as barriers to home-school collaboration: the observation that parents are often not aware of what is going on in the classroom; and the perception that parents and teachers "never get past the niceties of hello, how are you."

With regard to professional competence, Mr. Whiston questions whether he motivates and interests his students. Yet there is no talk of concrete strategies to measure student understanding and to provide for remedial teaching in ways that Ms. Quaid and Ms. Quinton do.

Once again we have a teacher who seldom speaks specifically about academic learning and achievement; one who, during the interviews, focuses more on the affective side of his work with students. Interestingly, when speaking from a parent point of view, a focus on academic learning is not listed as a characteristic of the ideal teacher.

Mr. Whiston: Parent Perceptions

General Comments

Three families from Mr. Whiston's grade seven class were interviewed: Families A and C have a son in his class; Family B, a daughter. Mother B describes Walnut Grove School as "a very friendly school." Mother C concurs. "I really like the school. . . . I feel like it is nice to come here. . . . I've always been welcome there."

Teacher Regard for Students

When asked if Mr. Whiston respects her daughter, Mother B responds: "Yes. I think you sense it in the child. You can tell exactly how they are being treated."

When the parents of Student A are asked whether Mr. Whiston respects their child, they, too, respond positively: "In Mr. Whiston's case, yes." They comment on the way "he treats kids. . . . He is more in level and treats them as young adults. . . . I think that's where he gets all the respect from the kids. He treats each one as his own person." They report several instances of positive teacher-student rapport. For instance, "I have seen outside, where kids would come up and ask and he would take time to explain it to him. . . . He will stop and he spends the time to talk and he will sit down and talk."

The family comments not only on affective considerations, they note as well that Mr. Whiston holds his students accountable and that his students respond positively to his expectations. By way of example, the parent comments: "I know (Mr. Whiston) takes marks off (when things are not turned in on time) because (my son) forgot one of his papers one day and was told that if it is not in by the end of the week, you do lose points. And, of course, it was in the next morning."

This family was also impressed with Mr. Whiston when he spoke against a proposal to form two grade six/seven split classes. He requested that "all grade sevens be kept together—even if it was a large class." "So," the parents remark, "he is fairly amazing in his teaching."

Parent C also speaks positively of Mr. Whiston's regard for students. Her opinion is based on conversations she has had with the teacher who "talks about (her son) being in the sports and telling me that he is doing good." She also notes that her son "always says very good things about his teacher and that he is happy."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Mother B reports that her daughter "loves" school. "We can tell," she says. "Her attitude is very obvious." This student is "very conscientious," and the only time homework is a problem is "if she doesn't have time" or when "she . . . gets very over-tired." Regarding her daughter's commitment to school-

work, the mother comments: "I don't really feel critical. I wonder if I would do as well."

Parents A report that their son, too, is very conscientious and strives for excellence. "This year he came home with six A's and a B. And he was so upset he got a B." Speaking specifically of their son's rapport with his teacher, it is evident that this young man holds Mr. Whiston in very high regard. "From grade one" their son "could hardly wait until he got to grade seven and have Mr. Whiston as a teacher." "Everybody waits to get into his class. The kids in kindergarten are talking about Mr. Whiston, and he knows them all." This teacher "just seems to bring out the best in every child. . . . I have never seen (our son) want to work for anybody as hard as he has for Mr. Whiston."

Mother C reports that her son, too, enjoys school. "This year . . . he feels really good about" it and "he is happy to go every morning. . . . "He never says that he doesn't want to go . . . even when it was minus forty and the busses were not running, I drove him to school every day." "He doesn't want to miss his school." "Last night he twisted his ankle and he was putting ice on it the whole night. Maybe I have to take you to the doctor," she commented. "No," he said, "I am going to school." "Definitely," she adds, "he is more interested now in school"—as is evidenced by the observation that "he is always doing his homework on time without asking."

Speaking specifically of her son's relationship with Mr. Whiston, she comments: "This year he likes his teacher and there is no problem. . . . He always says very good things about his teacher and that he is happy." Another indication of her son's positive regard for his teacher is, unlike previous years, "this year he has done his homework, like it is his first priority. He doesn't even go and play before he is done his homework." The mother is not certain what accounts for this change in behaviour. "Maybe it is just that he realizes that he is doing . . . better and maybe it is the teacher."

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Mother B remarks: "The teacher (my daughter) has this year . . . actually, I rather like him." "But," she adds, "I've felt that always about the (Walnut Grove) teachers." She also responds positively when asked if Mr. Whiston sees her as a partner in her child's education. Her opinion is based on Mr. Whiston's practice of sending home papers and exam marks for parent signatures.

Family A describes Mr. Whiston as "wonderful" and as "an amazing teacher." "He has no problem answering any of your questions or letting you know what he is doing. When asked if there has ever been a time when they felt excluded from their child's schooling, the parents respond: "Not with Mr. Whiston." ("That's a nice way of saying 'yes' with other teachers," she adds.) She responds similarly when asked whether Mr. Whiston has ever missed an opportunity to gain their support. "He is so open (and) he is willing to talk to you."

Parent C, too, reports that Mr. Whiston "is a really good teacher." This positive comment is a consequence, in part, of two teacher-initiated phone calls since Christmas to let the mother know "that he (her son) is doing really good." Mother C believes that the parent-teacher link "is pretty important to him"—a sentiment that endures throughout the year. In the spring, she comments: "I have been happy with grade seven and what has happened in the school. Things are going great."

Teacher Practices: Parent Involvement

As noted above, Mother B indicates that students in Mr. Whiston's class are expected to take assignments and exam marks home for parental perusal and signature. And the teacher "check(s) up, too. Because I think they get marks for having a parent's signature. So it is not that they can lose it. It has to be returned." She wonders if this is "a policy at Walnut Grove. All the teachers have done that. They send a lot of work home and they have asked for signatures to make sure that you have seen" it. In addition to signing

homework and tests, Mother A indicates that parents receive "a lot of information about what the children are studying" and regular progress reports that "give you a general idea of how well they (the children) are doing."

Family A also mentions Mr. Whiston's practice of sending home student work for parental signature. They, too, indicate that "marks are assigned for having them come back." They note, as well, that Mr. Whiston "runs a rather open classroom. You can go in any time. He has no problem with that."

Father A has strong opinions regarding teachers requesting parent support for student learning. Teachers "have never come to me and asked me or shown me anything." He continues: "I would feel as a teacher myself, and this is my view on it, that by doing that you are saying that you are not capable of teaching the kids. . . . That's the feeling I would get. That if you have to go to the parents and say, 'I can't teach your kid. Help me out.' " The mother comments: "Oh, I don't believe that." She brings closure to that part of the conversation by saying: "I see we are going to differ on that one." "As far as extra help" is concerned, Mother A remarks, "I think all teachers always kind of expect that you will be there but never actually ask you."

Mother C also reports a teacher-initiated approach to home-school partnerships. She was pleased when Mr. Whiston called her at home twice to let know that her son was "doing really good." That kind of phone call "is very important to me because (my son) wasn't doing so great in the first three grades . . ."

Mr. Whiston: Student Perceptions

Classroom Learning Environment

For Student A "some of the things we do in class" are fun. It is a stimulating, not a boring, place to be. He believes that his parents are also pleased

with the classroom. "I think they enjoy me being in the class." As for extending school learning into the home, both Students A and C report that parents are not asked to help with homework. They do, however, enlist parental support on their own. Student A remarks: "I like them helping me with my schoolwork because it makes it easier for me."

Student B also speaks well of the classroom. The learning environment is "pretty good all round." This is a classroom where students "get to make (their) own rules" and where "most of the kids get along and help each other out." Like Student A she, too, believes her parents are pleased with her teacher. They like the "people in the class and how the teacher treats people and stuff like that."

Student C's perceptions of classroom life are equally positive. This is a classroom where, when the students arrive, they "start working right away." When asked if things could be done differently or better in the classroom, he replies: "No, not really because the way our teachers behave right now is just fine." "I have no complaints." This is a place where "I'm working as hard as I can."

Student Regard for School and Teacher

Student A indicates that students feel comfortable expressing their concerns to Mr. Whiston and that when they do, he listens. By way of example, he notes that "we've asked him if we can do some more of something, usually P.E., because he'll cut off our gym time and we ask him if we can have extra gym time."

Student C describes Walnut Grove as "a fun kind of school," "a good little school" where there are "not too many kids who can bug you and get you off track." Congruent with his mother's comments regarding his commitment to school, Student C reports: "If I had a doctor's appointment, it would be after school or during lunch hour—try to fit it in so that I'm not away from school." Student C believes that his mother shares his positive

regard for the school. "She likes (it) because it has good teachers and the principal."

Count for Something

When asked if he counts for something in his classroom and school, Student A responds: "Some of the times—yes." "Big school activities . . . like clubs and our school band," of which he is a part, account for this positive response, as do opportunities to help the principal, by taking "down decorations in the gym" and by "changing all the chairs . . . in a few of the classes."

Student C also believes that he counts for something at school. Being mentioned in a newsletter that goes home each week is one source of positive feeling; another comes from "cleaning up the school and shovelling snow and helping the teachers."

Though less definite than Students A and C about whether she counts for something, Student B nonetheless provides the same kind of information about what makes her feel valued—helping out around the school.

Here, too, as with the parent data, students reveal a focus on hard work and attentiveness to learning in this classroom that does not come through in the teacher self-report data.

The study set out to determine the underlying norms, expectations, and obligations that constrain or enhance collaboration between and amongst teachers, students, and parents. Using the twelve teacher profiles reported in here, teachers were labeled collaborative or non-collaborative based on: their attitudes toward students; their attitudes toward parents and parent involvement in student learning; and the extent to which they nurtured collaborative partnerships with a focus on student learning between and amongst themselves, students, and parents. The degree of congruence between teacher beliefs and actions and that between teacher self-report data and student and parent data were also taken into account when labeling teachers collaborative (C) or non-collaborative (NC).

The teachers labeled collaborative are: Mr. Abrams, Ms. Quaid, Ms. Quinton, and to a lesser extent, but demonstrating potential, Mr. Brooks. Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston were also labeled collaborative— a decision based not on teacher self-report data but on information provided by students and parents. During the interviews Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston focused more on relational than academic interactions with students and parents. It was parents and students who revealed the commitment to student learning that resulted in Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston being grouped with the collaborative teachers.

Teachers categorized as non-collaborative are: Mr. Ashdown, Ms. Avril, Ms. Billings, Mr. Richards, Mr. Roy, and Mr. Simpson. The non-collaborative label does not suggest these teachers did nothing to establish partnerships with parents and students. It does suggest, however, that their practices in this regard were weak, inconsistent, and/or primarily reactive. In some cases, the non-collaborative label also indicates a discrepancy between word (positive attitudes toward students and parent involvement) and deed.

Chapter Six
Quantitative Analysis and Results

Introduction

The quantitative data was analyzed after the qualitative data had been examined and the profiles developed. The sequencing of the analysis is not typical. There was concern that familiarity with quantitative outcomes could create biases that could, in turn, negatively affect the coding process, thus the decision to analyze qualitative data first, quantitative data second. This decision is in keeping with Caracelli and Greene's (1993) recommended procedures for mixed method analyses.

The sample size was adequate for quantitative analysis at the level of the referent group. At the classroom level, however, the sample size was not as strong (ranging from 9–20). For this reason, the quantitative analysis was limited to simple descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVAs to determine between classroom differences on each scale. Also, because the teacher sample was considered too small to provide meaningful results, quantitative analysis was limited to parent and student data.

Scale Reliabilities

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, measures of internal reliability were computed for each scale using Cronbach's alpha (Borg & Gall, 1989). Seven of the nine parent scales pertain to the study and are reported here. They are:

- Scale 1 Parent perception of student-teacher communication (4 items, alpha = .66);
- Scale 2 Parent perception of student-parent communication (6 items, alpha = .82);

- Scale 3 Parent perception of teacher-parent communication (instruction) (4 items, alpha = .72);
- Scale 4 Parent perception of teacher-parent communication (general) (5 items, alpha = .65);
- Scale 5 Parent perception of teacher concern for parent involvement (7 items, alpha = .81);
- Scale 6 Parent perception of parent-school communication (6 items, alpha = .78);
- Scale 8 Parent perception of school climate (10 items, alpha = .81).

Three of the seven student scales are pertinent to this work. They are:

- Scale A Student perception of communication with parents (6 items, alpha = .77);
- Scale C Student perception of school-home communication (4 items, alpha = .73);
- Scale E Student perception of student-teacher collaboration (7 items; alpha = .72).

Reliabilities were deemed adequate by generally accepted standards and scales were thus subjected to further analysis. (Scale reliabilities and individual survey items are reported in Appendix 6.1).

Descriptive Statistics

Second, making the necessary adjustments for reversed items, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each scale and also for each scale by classroom at Time 1 and again at Time 2. The results are summarized in Tables 5 and 6. The lower the scale score, the more positive the attitude. Schools were also rated on a one (very poor) to nine (excellent) continuum. In this case, the higher the score, the more positive the rating.

Table 5
Student Scales: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Classroom

	Student Scales																	
	S/P Comm[A]				Sch/Home Comm[C]				S/T Coll[E]				School Rating				N	
	T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2		T1	T2
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Entire Sample	1.99	0.65	2.01	0.72	2.60	0.75	2.80	0.90	2.35	0.71	2.33	0.67	6.01	2.34	5.60	2.36	162	162
Abrams	1.97	0.55	2.18	0.77	1.92	0.52	2.25	0.45	2.32	0.85	1.98	0.49	6.85	1.52	6.64	1.29	11	11
Avril	2.02	0.57	1.98	0.41	2.64	0.71	2.89	0.53	2.11	0.61	2.11	0.59	6.00	1.73	5.11	2.32	9	9
Ashdown	1.58	0.49	1.80	0.67	2.50	0.68	2.63	0.68	2.19	0.73	2.53	0.73	5.10	2.77	4.40	1.84	10	10
Billings	2.26	0.85	2.22	0.96	2.82	0.77	2.86	0.97	2.50	0.62	2.49	0.54	5.50	1.92	4.93	2.01	18	18
Brooks	1.88	0.24	2.19	0.76	2.71	0.40	2.77	0.55	1.96	0.47	2.31	0.52	6.58	1.75	5.46	2.38	11	11
Quaid	2.29	0.75	2.12	0.66	2.94	0.60	2.37	0.50	2.43	0.36	2.42	0.74	6.59	1.78	6.34	2.15	17	17
Quinton	1.78	0.45	1.72	0.53	2.12	0.74	2.00	0.57	2.20	0.74	2.17	0.59	6.35	2.09	6.12	1.93	17	17
Richards	1.89	0.56	1.91	0.77	2.78	0.62	3.08	0.91	2.54	0.77	2.53	0.83	6.02	1.97	5.97	1.72	16	16
Roy	1.89	0.44	1.86	0.57	3.01	0.67	2.88	0.58	2.83	0.65	2.68	0.76	5.14	2.44	4.60	2.67	15	15
Simpson	2.52	1.06	2.41	1.03	2.82	0.40	2.75	0.58	2.44	0.65	2.77	0.68	5.73	2.28	6.09	1.98	11	11
Vickers	2.23	0.61	2.11	0.70	2.27	0.71	2.39	0.60	2.45	0.86	2.05	0.46	7.18	2.04	6.98	2.54	11	11
Whiston	1.77	0.65	1.83	0.53	2.90	0.81	2.61	0.84	2.23	0.76	1.93	0.40	6.50	2.07	6.18	1.80	16	16

Scale Names in Full

A. Student perception of communications with parents.
C. Student perception of school-home communication.
E. Student perception of student-teacher collaboration.

Notes:

- Scale data based on a 5-point spread (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree).
- School Rating based on a 9-point spread (1 = poor; 9 = excellent).
- T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.
- Scales B, D, F, and G not reported here.

Table 6
Parent Scales: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Classroom

	Parent Scales															
	S/T Comm[1]				S/P Comm[2]				T/P Comm (Inst)[3]				T/P Comm (Gen)[4]			
	T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Entire Sample	2.49	0.79	2.52	0.77	2.12	0.74	2.07	0.73	3.03	0.84	2.12	0.63	2.90	0.75	2.17	0.67
Abrams	2.32	0.70	2.30	0.64	2.27	1.03	2.26	1.09	2.50	0.77	3.00	0.87	2.53	0.69	2.56	0.64
Avril	2.00	0.28	2.19	0.48	2.28	0.60	2.31	0.55	3.03	0.85	3.56	0.69	3.09	0.62	3.28	0.67
Ashdown	2.15	0.53	2.95	0.40	2.12	0.54	2.26	0.71	2.72	0.49	3.25	0.36	2.80	0.49	2.77	0.31
Billings	2.68	0.77	2.79	0.90	2.10	0.73	2.24	0.66	3.30	0.83	3.25	0.36	3.11	0.83	3.26	0.80
Brooks	2.30	0.50	2.23	0.79	1.98	0.61	1.83	0.45	2.87	0.98	3.15	0.78	2.81	0.86	2.92	0.72
Quaid	2.46	0.57	2.41	0.47	2.07	0.65	2.13	0.66	3.13	0.66	2.66	0.53	3.04	0.50	2.93	0.44
Quinton	2.44	0.62	2.34	0.71	1.85	0.65	1.84	0.53	2.68	0.68	2.27	0.67	2.62	0.66	2.50	0.69
Richards	2.72	1.13	2.87	0.98	2.17	0.86	2.16	0.82	3.22	0.74	3.25	0.78	3.09	0.85	3.07	0.81
Roy	2.84	0.85	2.73	0.82	2.05	0.80	1.84	0.61	3.39	0.78	3.37	0.44	3.08	0.64	3.10	0.53
Simpson	2.59	0.80	2.79	0.72	2.36	0.77	2.29	0.75	3.36	1.07	3.34	0.69	2.85	0.98	3.17	0.80
Vickers	2.33	0.53	2.34	0.82	2.52	0.85	2.21	0.97	3.25	0.64	2.90	0.67	2.75	0.63	2.45	0.76
Whiston	2.16	0.83	2.13	0.63	1.90	0.55	1.74	0.70	2.92	0.81	3.00	0.87	2.81	0.73	2.70	0.73

Scale Names in Full

1. Parent perception of student-teacher communication.
2. Parent perception of student-parent communication.
3. Parent perception of teacher-parent communication (instruction).
4. Parent perception of teacher-parent communication (general).
5. Parent perception of teacher concern about parent involvement.
6. Parent perception of home-school communication.
8. Parent perception of school climate.

continued on next page

Table 6
Parent Scales: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Classroom ***(continued)***

	Parent Scales																	
	T Int. in Pl[5]				P/Sch Comm[6]				School Climate[8]				School Rating				N	
	T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2		T1		T2		T1	T2
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Entire Sample	2.05	0.61	1.43	0.34	2.16	0.71	2.39	0.63	2.33	0.60	2.39	0.63	6.27	2.13	6.38	1.20	162	162
Abrams	1.78	0.39	1.79	0.44	1.89	0.61	2.08	0.51	2.05	0.53	2.12	0.52	7.15	0.77	7.00	2.10	11	11
Avril	2.14	0.30	2.32	0.61	2.26	0.53	2.41	0.72	2.31	0.29	2.47	0.39	6.19	1.38	5.89	1.17	9	9
Ashdown	1.98	0.46	2.01	0.59	1.81	0.53	1.78	0.30	2.21	0.32	2.32	0.49	6.73	1.03	6.76	1.81	10	10
Billings	2.17	0.65	2.47	0.68	2.04	0.43	2.13	0.46	2.45	0.68	2.64	0.63	5.87	1.80	5.90	1.73	18	18
Brooks	2.14	0.49	2.30	0.56	2.37	0.77	2.71	0.93	2.14	0.55	2.20	0.47	6.91	1.70	6.46	1.57	11	11
Quaid	2.15	0.40	2.05	0.43	2.20	0.63	2.13	0.49	2.18	0.48	2.06	0.49	7.29	1.16	7.53	0.87	17	17
Quinton	1.76	0.49	1.98	0.55	1.98	0.53	2.00	0.80	2.13	0.59	2.00	0.58	7.18	1.29	6.68	1.61	17	17
Richards	2.56	0.78	2.21	0.67	2.31	0.74	2.26	0.72	2.58	0.47	2.52	0.76	6.46	1.40	6.13	1.71	16	16
Roy	2.17	0.63	2.38	0.63	2.37	0.85	2.39	0.64	2.55	0.47	2.56	0.69	6.04	1.20	5.84	1.91	15	15
Simpson	2.08	0.70	2.39	0.73	2.00	0.52	2.27	0.60	2.91	0.48	2.84	0.49	6.27	1.10	6.29	1.33	11	11
Vickers	1.86	0.44	1.66	0.62	2.09	0.44	1.88	0.41	2.19	0.48	1.87	0.56	7.09	1.51	7.64	1.43	11	11
Whiston	1.86	0.52	1.89	0.56	2.14	0.71	1.88	0.48	2.09	0.56	2.10	0.69	7.27	1.45	6.88	1.41	16	16

Notes:
- Scale data based on a 5-point spread (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree).
- School Rating based on a 9-point spread (1 = poor; 9 = excellent).
- T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.
- Scales 7 and 9 not reported here.

One-way ANOVAs: Time 1

Third, one-way Analyses of Variance with the teacher as the single factor were conducted to determine between-teacher differences on each scale at Time 1 and again at Time 2. (Table 7 lists scales for which statistically reliable differences were found.)

Table 7

Time 1 and Time 2 ANOVAS for Parent and Student Scales (N=162)

Parent Scales	**T1**	**T2**
1. Student-Teacher Communication	*	*
2. Student-Parent Communication	*	*
3. Teacher-Parent Communication (Instruction)	*	C.000
4. Teacher-Parent Communication (General)	*	0.007
5. Teacher Concern for Parent Involvement	*	0.007
6. Parent-School Communication	*	0.006
7. Parent Values School	*	*
8. School Climate	0.001	0.000
9. Parent Efficacy	*	*
Rating of School	*	*
Student Scales		
A. Communication with Parent(s)	*	*
B. Student Values School	*	*
C. Home-School Communication	0.000	0.001
D. Student Efficacy	*	*
E. Student-Teacher Collaboration	*	0.006
F. Parent Values School	*	*
G. Peer Values	*	*
Rating of School	*	*

Notes: •• F-values significant at the noted level of probability.

At Time 1 only two scales yielded statistically reliable differences: Parent Scale 8 (School Climate) and Student Scale C (Home-School Communication). Tukey's pairwise comparisons revealed that parents in Mr. Simpson's (NC) room perceived the school climate less favourably than

had those in the following classrooms: Ms. Quaid (C), Ms. Quinton (C), Mr. Whiston (C), Mr. Abrams (C), and Mr. Brooks (C)—excepting the absence of Mr. Vickers (C), this list comprises the classrooms of the collaborative teachers. The school to which Mr. Simpson (NC) is assigned does not differ on the school climate scale from those schools in which other non-collaborative teachers are working.

There are two possible explanations for this finding. One, schools with a less favourable school climate recruit less collaborative teachers at the outset and/or do little to nurture home-school collaboration amongst staff members. This top-down explanation suggests that what happens at the level of the school impacts classroom life. If the school overall is found deficient in a certain respect (in this case, parent-school relations), so, too, will the classroom. We do know that schools have such effects from the work of Teddlie and Stringfield (1993) and Rosenholtz (1989).

An alternate explanation reflects a bottom-up perspective and suggests that parent familiarity with a particular classroom is used to judge overall school climate, at least in this study. The items comprising this scale (see Appendix 6.1) make this a plausible explanation, as does the observation that parents in Mr. Simpson's (NC) class perceive the school's climate less positively than do those associated with Ms. Quaid (C), Ms. Quinton (C), Mr. Whiston (C), Mr. Abrams (C) and Mr. Brooks (C). The same trend appears at Time 2, though less strongly, when Tukey pairwise comparisons indicate that parents in Mr. Simpson's (NC) class again score school climate less favourably than do those in Ms. Quaid's (C), Ms. Quinton's(C), and Mr. Vickers' (C) classrooms. The same can be said of parents in Ms. Billings' (NC) room, who perceive school climate less favourably than those in Mr. Vickers' (C) class.

On the student side, only one Time 1 scale (Student Perceptions of Home-School Communications) distinguishes amongst classrooms. Ms. Quinton (C) is perceived more favourably than Mr. Roy (NC) and Mr. Abrams (C) is scored more favourably than Mr. Roy (NC) and Ms. Billings (NC), which is what the teacher profiles would predict. The

differences found between (Mr. Abrams (C) and Ms. Quaid (C) and Mr. Whiston (C)); and between (Ms. Quinton (C) and Ms. Quaid (C) and Mr. Whiston (C)) are not entirely unpredictable given that interviews reveal different levels of home-school communication even amongst collaborative teachers. It should be remembered, too, that Ms. Quinton (C) was working with a "wrangy bunch." The stronger perception of home-school communication in this classroom may focus on disciplinary rather than instructional issues. What is more troublesome are those classrooms that are found not to differ. From a student point of view, the collaborative and non-collaborative teachers in many cases do not distinguish themselves on the basis of home-school communication, with the obvious exception of Mr. Abrams (C).

It could be argued that the general inability to discriminate amongst classrooms at Time 1 is not surprising. Because surveys were administered early in the school year (October), teacher, students, and parents had not had much opportunity to become sufficiently acquainted with one another to permit discriminating judgments. And yet, the Time 1 qualitative data do not present the same problem. The fall interviews, which were conducted within a few days of the surveys being administered, do reveal classroom differences, both amongst teachers and amongst student and parent perceptions of teachers.

Questioning the Discrepancies between Data Sources

It must be questioned if the discrepancy between data sources is a conceptual or a measurement problem. It is more likely the latter. Because interview questions were designed to address the same general issues as the questionnaires, it is not surprising that interview comments address, although certainly are not limited to, the topics broached in the questionnaire. However, what may account for the lack of Time 1 differences, at least in part, is the way survey items were worded. Parents were asked, for instance, if their child's teacher(s) make(s) sure their child understands

homework assignment. Introducing the plural (teacher(s)) increases the likelihood of parents drawing not only on present but past experiences as well when formulating their responses. This tendency was noted and controlled for when analyzing the qualitative data. References to present and past teachers were coded under separate headings. To overcome this difficulty at Time 2 participants were asked to focus on the present academic year only when completing the questionnaire and/or during the interview.

One-way ANOVAs: Time 2

Because parents and students were asked to focus on the current year only at Time 2, Time 2 quantitative data are of greater interest. The Time 2 data also benefit from students and parents having had almost a full academic year to form their opinions. As reported in Table 6.3, five parent scales and two student scales discriminate amongst classrooms at Time 2. Student Perception of Home-School Communication (Scale C) and Student Perception of Student-Teacher Collaboration (F) discriminate amongst classrooms. As the profiles would predict, students perceive more home-school communication in Ms. Quinton's (C) class than they do in Mr. Roy's (NC), Mr. Richards' (NC), and Ms. Billings' (NC). Given the exploratory intent of the first year study, it is interesting to note that although statistically reliable differences are not found amongst other classrooms, an examination of the mean scale scores shows that students generally perceive that more home-school communication occurs with collaborative teachers than with their non-collaborative counterparts. In subsequent years survey items measuring this aspect of classroom life will be more finely crafted to tease out these differences. The qualitative findings will guide this process.

With regard to Scale E (Student Perception of Student-Teacher Collaboration), student perceptions of their relationship with Mr. Whiston (C) and Mr. Simpson (NC) account for the statistically reliable differences. Not surprisingly, given Mr. Whiston's (C) overt efforts to reach out to students, particularly socially, he is perceived to be more collaborative than Mr. Simpson (NC). Evidently, Mr. Simpson's stated fondness for his students does not

lead to student-teacher collaboration, at least not in the eyes of his charges. He speaks of students playing one end against the other and it must be questioned if this lack of trust accounts for the student perception of the relative lack of collaboration between student and teacher.

Once again, the scale mean scores support, with the exception of Ms. Avril (NC), the collaborative/non-collaborative distinctions formed on the basis of the interview data. Once again, too, further administrations of this instrument will benefit from our growing understanding of what constitutes a positive teacher-student relationship—not only from the teacher and parent point of view, but from the student point of view as well. Originally, collaboration was conceived of narrowly. Students were asked whether they had opportunities to choose what they were to study, for instance. While students typically enjoy some flexibility of this sort, they recognize that choice is limited by a number of external factors. While analyzing the qualitative data, it became evident that students define student-teacher collaboration far more broadly. They take into account the extent to which teachers: treat all students fairly; grant students permission to work collaboratively—but in a controlled setting; make themselves available for remedial or enriched assistance; and establish socially-appropriate relationships with students both within the classroom and beyond. Future renditions of the teacher-student collaboration scale will benefit from these insights.

Focusing now on parent scales for Time 2, statistically reliable differences are found for Scale 3 (Parent Perception of Teacher-parent Communication—Instruction). As the profiles would predict, parent perceptions of Ms. Quinton's (C) practices are significantly more favourable than are those for Mr. Roy (NC), Mr. Richards (NC), Mr. Simpson (NC), Ms. Avril (NC), Mr. Ashdown (NC), and Ms. Billings (NC). Furthermore, Ms. Quaid's (C) practices are perceived to be significantly more positive than Ms. Billings' (NC). The mean scores support distinctions made on the basis of the qualitative data.

Although the ANOVA indicates a statistically reliable difference for Scale 4 (Parent Perception of Teacher-parent Communication—General), Tukey pairwise comparisons do not identify which classrooms are responsible for this finding. Mean scale scores, however, support the collaborative-non-collaborative distinctions with one exception—Mr. Ashdown (NC) is perceived more favourably than Ms. Quaid (C) and Mr. Brooks (C).

It must be acknowledged that there is parental sympathy for Mr. Ashdown that may explain this finding. He is known to be a new teacher who, despite some parental concerns, is viewed as hardworking and committed. Because of this, perhaps, parents speak optimistically of his anticipated professional growth. He is a likeable person who, though struggling in the classroom with a difficult group of students, is perceived with some fondness. Ms. Avril can be similarly described. Analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data in concert permits a fine tuning of the collaborative/non-collaborative distinctions. The two data sets agree that these two teachers are on the cusp. Fortunately, these teachers stayed with the project into its third and fourth years. Their attitudes and behaviours in subsequent years are to be reported elsewhere.

Statistically reliable differences for Scale 5 (Teacher Concern for Parent Involvement) are accounted for by parents perceiving Mr. Vickers (C) more positively than Ms. Billings (NC). Although other differences are not statistically significant, the descriptive data again support the profiles' collaborative-non-collaborative designations. Again, however, the exception is Mr. Ashdown (NC), who is rated more favourably than Mr. Brooks (C), another first year teacher.

Finally, with respect to Scale 6 (Parent Perception of Parent-School Communication), parents fee free to and/or do contact collaborative teachers more than they do non-collaborative teachers. Mean scale scores support this argument as does the statistically reliable difference between Ms. Billings' (NC) class ant the classrooms of the following collaborative teachers: Ms. Quinton, Mr. Vickers, Mr. Whiston, and, the exception again, Mr. Ashdown.

Generally speaking, Time 2 statistically reliable differences and/or differences in scale mean scores corroborate the designations made using the qualitative data. The fact that this does not occur at Time 1 speaks to the importance of using different strategies to elicit information. If quantitative data only were used at Time 1, and even at Time 2, very different conclusions would be drawn: important distinctions between and amongst classrooms would go unnoticed. The relatively small sample size per classroom may account for this, in part. So, too, does the survey's lack of finesse in probing variables that are of particular interest to parents and students—factors that the researcher did not take into account as the study began. Failure to detect factors that influence the triadic relationship prevent a model of home-school collaboration from growing beyond the researcher's preconceived notions. Linking the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data as Fielding and Fielding (1986) and Caracelli and Greene (1993) advise addresses this potential weakness. By following their advice, this study refines our understanding of the placement of individuals within the collaborative and non-collaborative categories. It refines, as well, our understanding of what constitutes and facilitates the collaborative relationship from the teacher, parent, and very importantly, student point of view.

Chapter Seven
Putting It in Perspective

Introduction

This study began with four premises: one, that the classroom is a legitimate, although often neglected, focal point for effective schools research; two, that positive home-school partnerships are a characteristic of effective schools and, by extension, effective classrooms; three, that an often overlooked unit of analysis at the classroom level is the teacher-student-parent triad; and four, that classrooms and hence schools improve when the triad develops as a collaborative partnership with a focus on student learning.

With these premises in mind, the study set out to determine the underlying norms, expectations, and obligations that constrain or enhance collaboration between and amongst teachers, students, and parents. Using the twelve teacher profiles reported in Chapter Five, teachers were labeled collaborative or non-collaborative based on: their attitudes toward students; their attitudes toward parents and parent involvement in student learning; and the extent to which they nurtured collaborative partnerships with a focus on student learning between and amongst themselves, students, and parents. The degree of congruence between teacher beliefs and actions and that between teacher self-report data and student and parent data were also taken into account when labeling teachers collaborative (C) or non-collaborative (NC).

The teachers labeled collaborative are: Mr. Abrams, Ms. Quaid, Ms. Quinton, and to a lesser extent, but demonstrating potential, Mr. Brooks. Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston were also labeled collaborative —a decision based not on teacher self-report data but on information provided by students and parents. During the interviews Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston focused more on relational than academic interactions with

students and parents. It was parents and students who revealed the commitment to student learning that resulted in Mr. Vickers and Mr. Whiston being grouped with the collaborative teachers.

Teachers categorized as non-collaborative are: Mr. Ashdown, Ms. Avril, Ms. Billings, Mr. Richards, Mr. Roy, and Mr. Simpson. The non-collaborative label does not suggest these teachers did nothing to establish partnerships with parents and students. It does suggest, however, that their practices in this regard were weak, inconsistent, and/or primarily reactive. In some cases, the non-collaborative label also indicates a discrepancy between word (positive attitudes toward students and parent involvement) and deed.

The characteristics of the collaborative and non-collaborative teachers are described and discussed below. What follows is not an exhaustive re-presentation of materials contained in the profiles. Instead, behaviours and attitudes generally representative of one group of teachers or the other have been selected for the purpose of creating yet another set of profiles: the collaborative vs. the non-collaborative teacher. The discussion draws on Blase's work on the effective principal, which focused on relations between principals and teachers (1987). The reason for focusing on Blase's work is that during data analysis it became clear that members of all three referent groups spoke of teacher attitudes and behaviours that reflected Blase's distinction between task-relevant and consideration-related factors.

The Parallel Strengths of the Effective Principal and the Collaborative Teacher

Drawing on the professional leadership literature, Blase (1987) grouped characteristics of the effective principal into two categories: task-relevant and consideration-related. Task-relevant competencies focus on planning, defining, organizing, and evaluating work. Within this domain, the effective leader demonstrates strength in the following areas: accessibility; consistency, knowledge-expertise, decisiveness, goals and directions, follow

through, ability to manage time, and problem-solving. Consideration-related factors focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of others (Blase, 1987). Although Blase's study examines the principal's relationship with teachers, and this study examines the teacher's relationship with parents and students, his work nevertheless provides a useful framework for interpreting and reporting the data. Given the differences in teacher and principal responsibilities, the operationalization of the factors differs, but the underlying concepts remain the same.

Task-Relevant Competencies

Goals/Direction

With regard to goals and directions, students reveal an interesting distinction between collaborative and non-collaborative teachers. It is the extent to which students working with collaborative teachers refer to the classroom as a place to work and learn. For instance, when youngsters enter Mr. Whiston's (C) classroom, they "start working right away." In Mr. Vickers' (C) classroom students know they must come to school with their homework complete. They know as well that their teacher cares if they are having difficulty. Mr. Abrams (C) "teaches you a lot." In his classroom "you have to learn;" you do not "fool around." Mr. Brooks' (C) classroom, although "noisy," is "workable" and "the kids get busy and do their work." Ms. Quinton (C) runs a classroom where students "can get lots of work done." And, in Ms. Quaid's (C) classroom, learning is fun, "students are always doing something new," and it is "easy to understand because the teacher explains what to do and you catch on quickly."

The consistency with which students working with collaborative teachers refer to their classrooms as places where they work hard and where learning occurs is striking. Students associated with non-collaborative teachers do not volunteer this kind of information. It must be noted that collaborative classrooms are not without fault. Some students speak of them as being too noisy, for instance. Some speak of classmates

who are disruptive. It must be noted, as well, that non-collaborative classrooms are not without strengths. Indeed, some students comment on them positively—but they do not describe them as work-oriented. The consistency with which classrooms run by collaborative teachers are described in this way suggests that the collaborative teacher has created a climate that conveys a clear goal-oriented message—"this is a place to work and learn."

Knowledge/Expertise

It is one thing to have goals, it is another to have the knowledge and skill to realize them. Here, knowledge refers not only to the declarative and procedural knowledge teachers must have to work effectively with students. It refers as well to understanding the importance of establishing collaborative relationships between and amongst teachers, parents, and students and to knowing how to facilitate such partnerships at the grade six and seven level.

It is not unusual for teachers and parents alike to comment on the well-documented decline in parent involvement as students proceed through the school system (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). A variety of reasons are offered to explain this occurrence. Some are legitimate; others less so. It is true, for instance, that grade six and seven students no longer require the kind of assistance parents typically provide in the primary grades. The less satisfactory explanations have to do with: teacher uncertainty about how parents can be incorporated into the triad at this stage; and the perceived need, on the part of both parents and teachers, to pay respect to growing student independence that results in separating school and home. It is as if some teachers and parents believe that student independence can only be honoured by severing home-school, if not parent-student, ties. However, as one mother noted: "Grade seven is a tough year. You're twelve years old and you're going to tell the world what you think, and yet you still need someone to guide you" (23213). Martin (1992), who promotes the notion of the "schoolhome," as opposed to the "schoolhouse," is

in sympathy with this mother's concern. "To go beyond," she says, "is not necessarily to leave behind" (p. 138).

One can understand the problem of home-school partnerships at the grade six and seven level if parent involvement is defined in narrow terms that bring forward images of parents helping children, as they often do in earlier grades, cut and paste, prepare food, or don boots and overcoats. But if one thinks in terms of intellectual partnerships between parents and students, the doors to home-school collaboration remain open. This openness is contingent, of course, on the teacher's willingness and ability to provide parents with the information they need to work effectively with students in the home. It is contingent, as well, on the extent to which teachers encourage students to view parents as partners in learning.

This is exactly what the collaborative teachers in our study do. For Ms. Quinton, at least, it is a matter of professional responsibility to do so. "One of my jobs is to let the parents know" what is happening with their children and to let them know "that they can take part." Although each collaborative teacher approaches this responsibility differently, amongst them we see examples of teachers who provide parents with weekly curricular updates and examples of work completed during that time; keep parents informed of homework assignments, project due dates, and test dates through the universal use of homework books; and provide parents with *specific* information on how to help their child with learning tasks assigned for home completion. What these teachers acknowledge is that "less direct involvement of parents in the classroom is appropriate as children mature and develop." With collaborative teachers, however, this does not lead to a "distancing" or a loss of "important opportunities for home-school collaboration" (Chrispeels, 1992, p. 2).

Ms. Quinton's inclination to view teacher, parent, and child as both teacher and learner provides an example of the kind of attitudinal shift that reflects the changing nature of the relationship between adults and children of this age—from hierarchical to lateral (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). It demonstrates, as well, a willingness to share professional knowl-

edge with parents—a trait that characterizes collaborative teachers and distinguishes them from their non-collaborative colleagues, who are not sure how they "could use (parents) to fullest advantage" (Mr. Ashdown).

Within the context of home-school partnerships, knowledge rests not only with the professional. Collaborative teachers acknowledge in ways their non-collaborative colleagues do not that parents have skills and expertise from which they and their students can benefit. Unlike Mr. Simpson (NC), who believes that "to think anyone can teach is really a slap in the face," Mr. Brooks (C), Ms. Quaid (C), Ms. Quinton (C), Mr. Vickers (C), and Mr. Abrams (C) encourage parents to become involved in an instructional capacity: by serving as instructors on field trips; by encouraging parents to discuss with their children a novel being studied in class; by inviting parents into the classroom to teach art or to speak of their work experiences; or by having parents serve as the final editor for student writing projects.

Parents in non-collaborative classrooms do not fail to notice when their interest in helping their children learn is not acknowledged. A father in Mr. Ashdown's (NC) class believes that Mr. Ashdown views him as a partner in the child's education "emotionally," but "academically, he's not prepared to accept us too much." This is consistent with Mr. Ashdown's comment that he has not actively sought out parent assistance. The father's comments also reflect a sentiment expressed by Mr. Richards, who reports: "I look at teaching for learning as the area in which I work, and I look for help from parents in behaviour." Given this, it is not surprising to hear a mother from Ms. Billings' class comment: "The schools are always looking for participation, not necessarily in the educational department, but you know, they like you to come in and help in the library and do all that sort of stuff. But as far as helping the individual child, they really don't seem to encourage that."

For collaborative teachers educational background does not determine a parent's ability to provide home support. Mr. Abrams (C) recognizes that lack of education can be a barrier to parent involvement from the *parent's*

perspective, but based on Mr. Brooks' (C) comments, the collaborative teacher does not share that perception. Mr. Brooks believes that, "despite their level of education, there is always something that somebody can do, that they can help out in some ways." Mr. Vickers (C) has managed to convey this sentiment to the mother of a child in his classroom. Because she is not well educated, the mother reports feeling uncomfortable talking with teachers. Mr. Vickers, however, is an exception. She comments: "He is probably the first teacher that I have actually related to comfortably." One questions how comfortable she would have felt dealing with Ms. Billings (NC), who believes "it is . . . unreal . . . when the parents themselves only have a grade eight education, to expect them to be assisting."

To the collaborative teacher, then, parents are a valuable source of information and assistance. Students are perceived similarly. Ms. Quaid (C), for instance, believes her teaching repertoire is enhanced when she and her students negotiate the criteria for successful completion of learning activities. When projects are assigned, it is not unusual for students to ask if they may "just change this and do it this way?" This pleases Ms. Quaid. "When they come up with a new idea, I love it because then I add it to my list of activities." Ms. Quinton (C), too, is inclined to place students in the role of teacher. In her case, she encourages students "to tell their parents two or three things each day that they've done" and to recognize that not all parents know the material, and students, therefore, must "take it home and explain it to them."

It is not so much what the non-collaborative teachers *do say* on this topic but rather what they *do not say* that creates the impression of limited teacher appreciation of the knowledge students and parents can bring to the relationship. Focusing on what is not said is an interesting way to approach the parent data as well. Parents who are associated with collaborative teachers do not always mention the various strategies these teachers use to create home-school partnerships. Of greater interest, however, is the observation that neither do they mention such things as: "I wouldn't mind a bit more information coming home" (Mr. Richard's (NC)

class); or "I don't know what is going on in the classroom. I wish there was really more . . . into notifying parents as to what is expected. . . . I'm going to try . . . next year to have a copy, an absolute copy of the school curriculum for every grade now on through" (Mr. Ashdown's (NC) class). One important difference between the collaborative and non-collaborative teacher, then, is the extent to which they share knowledge and are receptive to receiving it from other members of the triad.

Accessibility

Goals and knowledge are undoubtedly important, but if parents and students cannot access that knowledge, goals become more difficult to realize. Thus, the need for teachers to be accessible. Blase (1987) defines "accessibility" as "availability and visibility." Accessible principals are professionals who "arrive at work early and stay late," "work hard and long hours," "circulate a lot," are "involved in everything" and are "everywhere." It is acknowledged that given different responsibilities, principals and teachers will differ in what and how they are "involved in everything," but this characteristic of the effective principal is a characteristic, as well, of at least two collaborative teachers.

Mr. Abrams (C), for instance, is very much involved in extra-curricular activities. To discuss extracurricular activities may appear to take the discussion out of the classroom and away from a focus on academic learning. However, it is mentioned here because one parent perceives Mr. Abrams' involvement beyond the classroom as having a positive "spill over" effect on her daughter's school work. This mother describes the student as having a "more positive attitude . . . this year." She attributes this to Mr. Abrams' involvement in extra-curricular sports activities, which provide the focal point of her daughter's school life. She "seems to centre her activities in that area, and if she does well it sort of spills over into her school work. The fact that (Mr. Abrams) leads a lot of those physical activities . . . is helping her." In this regard, the distinction between the consideration and the task oriented features of the collaborative

teacher become blurred, as they do for Mr. Vickers (C), who has pizza nights at his home for all his students.

How Mr. Vickers' pizza parties impact student learning or commitment to school is difficult to unravel as no parent mentions these effects specifically. However, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993, p. 277) identify "frequency and quality of teacher social interactions" in the classroom as one of the proximal, that is to say powerful, variables in their model of school learning. Admittedly, the activities just described occur beyond the classroom. However what is abundantly clear is that Mr. Vickers (C) and Mr. Abrams (C) are highly respected by students and parents alike and that this respect has classroom consequences. As Metz (1993) and Mortimore (1993) point out, a positive relationship between teacher and student is a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition of student engagement. By contrast, with the exception of Ms. Avril (NC), non-collaborative teachers seldom mention involvement beyond the classroom or the regular school day.

Ability to Manage Time

Time is not a deterrent to the collaborative teacher. They find time-efficient ways to keep parents informed. Ms. Quaid (C) and Ms. Quinton (C), who both adopted the folder system, assigned students the responsibility of creating the folders and of accumulating the materials to be sent home on a weekly basis. These teachers safeguarded valuable teacher time for preparing and/or responding to comments in the section of the work folder designed for that purpose.

Collaborative teachers also *make* time for both students and parents. Ms. Quinton (C) notes that "we've got to, as teachers, fit our timetables around (parents) to make it more convenient for them." Parent information indicates that Ms. Quinton is true to her word. She scheduled 7:30 a.m. meetings with one family in order to accommodate both the father's work schedule and his interest in meeting with the teacher. Ms. Quinton uses another practice to facilitate home-school communication beyond the regular working day. She distributes her home phone number to parents

during the first week of school and specifies the hours during which she can be reached: 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. This time is used to contact parents and to receive incoming calls. One father reported feeling uncomfortable phoning the teacher at home but, remembering Ms. Quinton's invitation to do so, took advantage of this opportunity to discuss an issue that was causing his daughter difficulty.

It is helpful to juxtapose this information against comments made by a parent in Ms. Avril's (NC) class. The mother describes the relationship between teachers and parents as poor, attributing this to lack of communication. Because she works outside the home, she, like many working parents, feels that she has little opportunity to communicate with the teacher. She does not fault the teacher, who, she believes, "probably thinks that I am free to call her and like it's up to me to go to her and make the move." She continues: "I'm sure we could talk on the phone. She could phone me at work, (but) I don't expect her to do that. . . . I am never home until six or six thirty and I mean she's finished at school . . . she has had her day. . . . I don't know how we could connect."

Ms. Quinton's (C) parents do not have this problem. They know how to connect. They know when to connect. They know this because the collaborative teacher has done something the non-collaborative teacher has not: she has recognized the importance of the teacher taking the first step in establishing positive home-school partnerships; and she has provided parents with a specific invitation to call and with specific information about when she is available. She has also addressed a time availability problem that Ms. Avril (NC) has not. "I guess there always could be more contact with parents," Ms. Avril comments, "but when do you find the time?" The implications for home-school partnerships are clear.

Teacher availability is also important to students. Just as Ms. Quinton (C) made time available in the morning for parents, Ms. Quaid (C) does the same for students. They are welcome in the classroom, as long as they arrive before 8:15. Students and parents alike are aware that during this time Ms. Quaid is available to help students review work previously covered

in class; to rewrite exams; or simply to complete homework because "morning (is) just their time" to work efficiently. Ms. Quaid (C) is pleased that the early morning sessions have become "habit forming" for some students. She believes the formation of such habits will serve them well in high school.

Unlike Ms. Quaid (C), Ms. Avril (NC) is anything but gracious with those who arrive early to complete homework. Her students receive the following message: "Well, you're lucky I'm here at seven o'clock. Otherwise you wouldn't get in. (Ms. Avril reports elsewhere that she regularly arrives at school at 7:15 a.m.).

Consistency and Follow-through

Although "consistency" and "follow-through" appear as separate headings in Blase's work, they are collapsed here because, it is argued, it is the consistency of follow-through that is important. Although no interview or survey question addressed this topic, this factor emerges as another factor that distinguishes the collaborative from the non-collaborative teacher.

One aspect of follow-through, and one that is linked to the realization of learning goals, is the extent to which teachers follow through with—or hold students accountable for—homework completion. Ms. Quaid (C), for instance, comments: it "doesn't take (students) very long to realize that the 85 excuses really aren't going to work"—homework must be done. Collaborative teachers are consistent not only in their expectation that students do the work assigned but also in their reaction when these expectations are not met. Ms. Quaid (C) is quoted again. Although "there's no death penalty" when students fail to complete a homework assignment, they know they will be held accountable. To this end, she and the student discuss a realistic completion date for the outstanding work.

Teacher follow-through on homework assignments is a salient teacher behaviour from the parent point of view as well. Ms. Quinton (C), for instance, is known to make an upward adjustment to student marks when

corrections are completed satisfactorily. Mr. Whiston (C) is known to take marks off for late assignments. Known, too, is the effect this has on students. One mother explains: "My son forgot one of his papers one day and was told that if it is not in by the end of the week, you lose points. And, of course," she adds, "it was in the next morning."

Another example of consistency and follow-through comes from Mr. Abrams' (C) class. Although he comments that it was "a real pulling of teeth" to have students adopt his standards, it is obvious from parent reports that honouring his expectations is important. One mother comments that her son knows "he has to do all his work" because if he doesn't, "his teacher makes him stay after school." Another mother indicates how important it is to her daughter that she do "everything just perfect—the way he likes it." At the beginning of the year, Mr. Abrams (C) conveys his exacting standards for assignment completion to parents. One mother reports finding this very helpful because she then knows what to look for when she reviews her child's homework. The high standards and the accountability are not damaging to Mr. Abrams' relationships with students. Both parents report that their children have a great deal of respect for this teacher, work well with him, and are demonstrating more positive attitudes to school than in previous years.

Whereas non-collaborative teachers speak of the importance of students following through on their responsibilities, they seldom give concrete examples of how that responsibility is developed. Collaborative teachers, however, discuss specific attitudes and practices that encourage the development of student accountability. For instance, when Ms. Quaid (C) is planning long-term projects with her students, she encourages them to set realistic goals, because, she explains to them: "I want you to meet what you say you can do." Mr. Vickers' (C) comment characterizes the collaborative teachers' sentiment on this topic. Students "have to be taught the skills. It isn't fair to say: 'You are now thirteen and you have to (be responsible). . . . First, they have to be taught or shown that this is possible. Secondly, they have to be given a chance to practice these skills." For

Mr. Vickers and for several other collaborative teachers, universal use of the homework book serves this purpose.

Although teachers like Mr. Richards (NC) comment extensively on the importance of student responsibility, typically their comments remain at the level of generalities. They do not provide specific information on how they nurture student development in this area. Furthermore, they are the teachers whom parents report fail to follow through on their own commitments. Mr. Richards (NC), for instance, unexpectedly and without explanation dropped a project about which "the kids were really enthusiastic." He failed, as well, to honour a commitment to send home worksheets for a child requiring extra help. Yet another example of failure to follow through comes from Mr. Richards' class. In this instance, the teacher neglected to keep parents informed of student progress or, more accurately, the lack thereof. The parents report being advised during the fall interview that their daughter "was doing fine." They were completely taken aback, therefore, when the report card revealed a significant drop in grades from the previous year. Unbeknownst to them, their daughter had failed to complete several homework assignments. Although they had been concerned about the seeming lack of homework and had discussed this with their daughter, she had repeatedly advised them that none had been assigned. This kind of confusion does not arise in a class like Ms. Quaid's (C) where parents are advised at the beginning of the year of the amount of homework to expect and what to do if the child reports that none has been assigned for the evening.

Mr. Simpson (NC) is another teacher who failed to follow through. Like all teachers, Mr. Simpson comments on the importance of students demonstrating responsibility. However, when a majority of students failed to complete an assignment by the scheduled due date, rather than hold them accountable, the deadline was moved. The parent who reported this incident was upset. She explains: "It was to be done (over a vacation period). No exceptions. There was two hours a day for the whole holiday break. We fought . . . all week to do this homework." She approached Mr. Simpson

with the suggestion that students who had honoured his instructions be given bonus marks—something to acknowledge their efforts. The suggestion was not accepted. Not surprisingly, the mother asked Mr. Simpson: "What are you teaching our kids? You lay down the law and then you change your mind at the last moment." Because these parents were working with a child who actively resisted their efforts to monitor homework completion, this situation was particularly stressful. No instances of inconsistent follow-through were reported for collaborative teachers.

Consideration-related Factors

Although Blase (1987) breaks consideration-related factors into the four subcategories noted earlier, they are dealt with here under one heading. In many important ways, the information presented under "Task-relevant Competencies" predicts what is reported in this section. Based on comments from all three referent groups, there is consensus that collaborative teachers hold students and parents in high regard. Parents and students working with collaborative teachers generally report that students in these classrooms enjoy school, like their teacher, and feel respected. A mother in Ms. Quaid's (C) room reports that her daughter is more engaged academically and enjoys her schoolwork more than she did in previous years. A parent in Mr. Abrams' (C) room reports similarly. A mother in Mr. Whiston's (C) class reports that her son enjoys school and "this year . . . feels really good about it." A student in Mr. Vickers' (C) class reports that school is "like a second home." A mother in Mr. Brooks' (C) class reports that the teacher has "a really good relationship with his students. . . . I really feel it. . . . He doesn't talk down to them. He talks to them as an equal." A student in this class comments that Mr. Brooks makes her feel "welcome and important." All these remarks are consistent with information the teacher provided about his or her attitude toward students.

Parents of children assigned to non-collaborative teachers offer information that reveals important differences between the two types of teacher. A father in Mr. Ashdown's (NC) room reports that the teacher has "guide-

lines" of what constitutes "a perfect student" and what he is telling me is that "my kid doesn't meet that criteria. . . . My son knows it, too," he adds. Not all parents associated with non-collaborative teachers are as critical. However, neither are they as positive as their counterparts in the other classrooms. A mother in Ms. Billings' (NC) room reports that her daughter is "not really all that happy in her class." In Mr. Richards' (NC) class, parents and students seem generally satisfied although there is concern expressed about unfair disciplinary procedures. Student and parent reactions to Mr. Simpson (NC) are mixed. One young man considers the student-teacher relationship generally satisfactory, but there are complaints here, too, of unfair disciplinary practices. Another student reports: "I just don't like him. Nobody in our class does." Ms. Avril and Mr. Roy, though labeled non-collaborative, appear to have more positive relationships with students than do their counterparts, although with Ms. Avril, too, there are complaints that she is not always fair in her dealings with students.

Consideration-related factors reflected in *parent-teacher relationships* are just as revealing. Parents of non-collaborative teachers more often express the feeling that the relationship between parent and teacher is "distant." This often has to do with lack of communication or the sense that the teacher wishes to keep the parent at bay. A father in Mr. Roy's (NC) room comments: "We just don't see each other, even though we're working toward a common goal." Another parent from the same class reports: "We just haven't had contact with the man. . . . We haven't gotten to know him that well." A mother in Ms. Billings' (NC) class also comments on the lack of rapport established between home and school. She explains: We have "only met a couple of times, and it hasn't been a long enough period to really get down to a comfortable relationship." Another parent with a child in Ms. Billings' room is more direct in expressing her displeasure: "I wouldn't know her if I fell over her on the street." To this mother, the relationship between parents and teachers is a "big joke . . . I don't think it's there."

Even when there is contact between non-collaborative teachers and parents, however, it does not necessarily create a spirit of partnership. A mother in Mr. Simpson's (NC) class explains that although she and the teacher were working together more at the end of the year than they were at the beginning, she continues to "get the sense . . . that he figures he can handle it himself better."

There are certainly within-classroom differences with regard to parent perceptions of the relationship between the parent and the teacher labeled "non-collaborative." What is interesting to note, however, is that the kinds of comment reported immediately above simply do not appear in conversations with parents whose children are assigned to the classrooms of collaborative teachers. More typically, and with greater consistency, parents associated with collaborative teachers report that: there is "no doubt" that parents are viewed as partners in their child's education; that the teacher appreciates the advocacy role parents play on behalf of their children; that the teacher appreciates, as well, that families are interested in and capable of assisting in the home and that the teacher provides specific information that permits them to do so.

Furthermore, in contrast to what their counterparts report, parents working with collaborative teachers indicate that the parent-teacher relationship has developed over the academic year. A mother whose child is in Ms. Quinton's (C) room reports: "We have more mutual understanding. There is more follow-up on her part, more contact. I feel more confident now. Maybe because we have got to know her." A parent in Mr. Vickers' (C) room expresses a similar sentiment. She comments: "He is probably the first teacher that I have actually related to comfortably. . . . I feel like I can talk to Mr. Vickers now (at the end of the year). . . . You know what I mean? You have to get to know them." "Getting to know them" is a far more likely occurrence for parents associated with collaborative teachers than for those working with their non-collaborative colleagues.

In summarizing his findings, Blase (1987, p. 606) reports that

leadership factors affected teacher motivation, involvement, and morale and, in general, enhanced the possibility of productive interactions between teachers and others. At a more abstract level, effective leadership was linked to the development of productive social and cultural structures in schools.

Collaborative teachers do likewise at the classroom level. Their attitudes and behaviours impact on students and parents as the characteristics of the effective principal impact on teachers. They create an environment in the classroom that balances the importance of academics with the importance of positive teacher-student social relationships, increasing the likelihood of student satisfaction with school and academic success (Metz, 1993). Furthermore, they extend the mutually respectful relationship they create with students beyond the classroom and form a similar type of relationship with parents, encouraging as they do the growth not only of purposeful dyadic relationships but the growth of the triadic relationship as well.

Reconsidering Study Premises

The characteristics of the collaborative teacher having been defined, it is appropriate to ask in what ways, if at all, this information supports the premises on which the study was based and/or speaks to their relevancy:

- one, the classroom is a legitimate, although often neglected, focal point for effective schools research;
- two, positive home-school partnerships are a characteristic of effective schools and, by extension, effective classrooms;
- three, an often overlooked unit of analysis at the classroom level is the teacher-student-parent triad; and
- four, classrooms and hence schools improve, in part, to the extent to which the triad develops as a collaborative partnership with a focus on student learning.

In addition to the parallel characteristics of the collaborative teacher and the effective principal, support for these assumptions comes from two other sources: the effective schools literature and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg's (1993) model of school learning.

Collaborative Teachers and School Effectiveness

In comparing this study's findings to those reported in the effective schools literature, it is necessary to point out one major difference—test scores, gain scores, or other typical measures of school effectiveness are not mentioned here. This is purposeful and reflects Sirotnick's (1987) belief that although achievement scores may provide useful descriptive data, they have no "supreme status against which the relevance of all other information is judged" (p. 47.) Driscoll (1992, p. 123) concurs.

> Our lens for examining "effectiveness" has been too narrow for too long. Improved communication, better attendance, more positive teacher-parent rapport—these, it may be argued, should be ends in themselves, and at the very least, can be seen as harbingers of a climate in which students can learn effectively.

Whether the measures to which Driscoll refers ought to be "ends in themselves" is questionable. There is a danger in placing too much emphasis on consideration-related issues at the expense of task-related factors. As Blase notes, it is the ability to balance the two that defines the effective school principal and by extension, the collaborative teacher. Mortimore (1993) concurs: "The key lesson from school-effectiveness research is that the ends must constantly be kept in sight in order to prevent any of the means from assuming importance *in their own right* and, thereby, distracting energy from the main task" (p. 306).

This caution having been noted, it can be stated that Driscoll's reference to the "harbingers of a climate in which students can work effectively" is important. This kind of environment increases the likelihood

of students experiencing both academic success and emotionally satisfying relationships. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of students bonding with the school and remaining committed to its goals. Our data support these claims. This is evident from the number of times parents associated with collaborative teachers report that their children are more committed to their schoolwork, are working harder, are more involved in school activities outside the classroom, and are enjoying school more than they have in the past. These are the classrooms that we would wish for all students—and particularly those who are on the fringes and at risk of "fading out" (Raddysh, 1992), that is dropping out in secondary school.

I now discuss this study's findings from the perspective of the effective schools literature. Summarizing the work of many, Chrispeels (1992, pp. 9–10) reports the following characteristics of effective schools. They demonstrate:

- instructional leadership by principal and staff;
- clear school mission;
- opportunity to learn and student time on task;
- high expectations;
- frequent monitoring of student progress;
- a positive, safe, orderly learning environment;
- positive home-school relations.

The qualitative data reveal that collaborative teachers create a classroom setting that reflects many of these characteristics. They convey to students and parents alike the message that in their classrooms students work hard and "learn lots" (opportunity to learn). They do this in an environment that is perceived to be conducive to learning and in which students are kept informed of what is expected of them (high expectations) and how well they have achieved those goals (frequent monitoring of student progress). The collaborative teacher not only provides students with opportunities to learn within the classroom but extends those opportunities

beyond the school house and the school day (student time on task) by keeping parents informed of what youngsters are learning in class, how well they are doing, and how, in specific ways, parents can support learning goals and activities in the home (positive home-school relations). All this is done in an atmosphere that conveys to students, and parents too, that they are engaged in a mutually respectful, mutually beneficial relationship (positive, safe, orderly learning environment) that is working toward a common goal—student learning and success.

Collaborative Teachers and a Model of School Learning

The findings reported here are linked not only to the repeatedly reported characteristics of effective schools. They are linked as well to the outcomes of the largest, most ambitious integrative review to date of educational, psychological, and social factors that impact school learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Using evidence provided by 61 research experts, 91 meta-analyses, and 179 handbook chapters and narrative reviews, Wang and her colleagues developed a framework comprised of six theoretical constructs that capture the various influences affecting student learning. The 228 variables that emerged from a review of the various data sources noted above were grouped into 30 categories that, in turn, were grouped into the following six constructs: (a) state and district governance and organization; (b) home and community educational contexts; (c) school demographics; (d) design and delivery of curriculum and instruction; (e) classroom practices; and (f) student characteristics.

These constructs were further categorized and labeled as *proximal*, variables that have an "immediate effect on students" (p. 268), or *distal*, variables that are "at least one step removed from the daily learning experiences of most students" (p. 276). The latter takes into account organizational characteristics and policies at the state (provincial), district, and school level; the former, psychological, instructional, and home environment factors. More specifically, proximal variables refer to:

- student characteristics (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and affective variables);
- classroom practices (management, instruction, and the quality of the teacher-student relationship);
- home and community educational contexts (educational characteristics of the home and parent attitudes and activities that support school learning).

Wang and her colleagues report consensus amongst all three data sources that proximal variables have the greatest impact on student learning. Two of these variables are of particular interest to this study: one, student and teacher social interactions; and two, home environment and parental support. As noted above, "the home environment includes not only the educational characteristics of the home but also parent activities and attitudes that support student learning" (p. 278). It is essentially the "curriculum of the home" referred to in an earlier chapter. It takes into consideration, amongst other things, the extent to which parents monitor or assist with homework, provide an environment conducive to the completion of school learning tasks in the home and at school, and encourage students to achieve their academic potential. The work reported here demonstrates very clearly how the actions of collaborative teachers increase the opportunity for parents to act in these ways. Such teachers, then, nurture the kind of home influences that Wang and her colleagues report have a strong effect on student learning.

There is a point to which parents can proceed along this path using their own resources. However, there is a point beyond which parents cannot fulfil their wishes to support school learning in the home without the support of a collaborative teacher's positive regard for school-home partnerships—a regard that manifests itself in ways already discussed: providing parents with curricular overviews; keeping parents informed of student progress; giving parents specific information on how to help a student with a particular activity; and encouraging students to view their parents as partners in learning by discussing classroom learning events

with parents on a daily basis and by requesting their assistance with homework, be that in an instructional or monitoring capacity.

Strategies that bring the "co" part of the co-production of learning into focus include: establishing communicative structures to permit information to flow not only *from* the teacher but *to* the teacher as well. Representative strategies that the collaborative teachers in this study used include: providing a place for parent comments in both homework books and student work-folders and by accommodating parent work schedules by meeting early in the day or by establishing and announcing home "office hours" during which parents are invited to communicate with the teacher by phone.

Wang et al. (1993) comment that "the home functions as the most salient out-of-school context for student learning, amplifying or diminishing the school's effect on learning" (p. 278). Encouraging adoption at the classroom level of the kinds of strategies noted above increases the ability of the home to serve in an amplifying capacity. It is also speaks to the importance this study places on an inside-out approach to school improvement and the appropriateness of doing so. As Wang and her colleagues comment: "proximal variables like . . . home environment variables have more impact on learning than most of the variables studied and should be part of an effective strategy to promote student learning" (p. 276). Both the study reported here and the work of Wang and her colleagues provide empirical support for the theoretical position paper entitled *In the Web* (Coleman & Collinge, 1991), which laid the foundation of the Co-production of Learning Project. In that paper it was argued that of the various kinds of external influences that impact schools, the familial was the most powerful and that "classroom and school improvement cannot be attained without changing the relationship between the three central figures—teacher, student, and parent" (p. 262).

The second of the two proximal variables pertinent to this study is the relationship between teacher and student. "One type of classroom interaction that has been linked to student outcomes is the amount and quality of

teacher and student academic interactions. . . . A second type of classroom interaction that has also been linked to student outcomes is the frequency and quality of teacher and student social interactions" (Wang et al., 1993, p. 277). This is similar to Blase's (1987) commentary on task-related and consideration-related variables. As was mentioned when discussing Blase's work, collaborative teachers demonstrate an ability to focus on and maintain a balance between both aspects of the teacher-student relationship. They do so with positive effect upon students' and parents' attitudes.

Given the importance Wang et al.(1993) attach to these features of school life, it is interesting that the school effectiveness literature seldom focuses on the student-teacher relationship. During the data analysis stage of this work, it became clear that this is an important oversight. The student member of the teacher-parent-student triad is a far more critical link between home and school than is envisioned when students are conceived of simply as conveyors of newsletters and teacher requests for parent assistance on field trips.

Not only does the student-teacher relationship impact student learning and attitude toward school. It impacts, as well, the parent-teacher relationship in important ways. Those ways may be positive, as is evident from the comment made by a mother in Mr. Brooks' (C) class. She perceives the student-teacher relationship to be healthy and comments on how this affects her willingness as parent to meet the teacher. "She (the daughter) liked him and she told me a little bit about him. You're a little more optimistic to meet somebody that your child has already said, 'hey, they're really nice.'"

The other end of the continuum is represented by a comment made by Mr. Simpson (NC). "The kids," he remarks, "are excellent at playing two ends against the middle. . . . Most of (the parents) don't really know what's going on here. In the distance between here and the home, (the students) can change things around to make it fit the way they want it to fit." He is asked if he thinks students play one end against the other. His response: "Like a piano." The implications for home-school partnerships are obvious.

So are the outcomes, as is evident from the events described earlier by a parent in Mr. Richards' (NC) class. The situation focused on a female student whose peers had changed significantly from one year to the next. Whereas during the previous year, she and her friends were honour students, this year her companions were characterized by the mother as interested solely in boys, hair, and shopping. Unbeknownst to her parents, this young girl neglected her homework over an extended period of time and responded to parent enquiries about lack of homework by advising them that none had been assigned. In this situation, the two adult members of the triad had not established routine communication and as a consequence the child was given considerable power to fail.

The power adult members of the triad give students is noticeable as well when they talk about the need to honour emerging adolescent independence. Some parents speak of not wanting to embarrass their children by appearing at the school—and thus stay away. Some teachers speak of student embarrassment as well and/or the wish to allow students to operate independently of the family—and take this into consideration when contemplating school-home liaisons at this level.

Mr. Vickers (C), a collaborative teacher working with grade seven students for the first time during the data collection period for this study, admitted to falling prey to what is considered here to be a bias about the nature of pre-adolescent student-parent relationships. At the beginning of the year he commented: you "have to be careful (about involving parents, particularly in the classroom) because around grade seven a lot of kids don't want Mom and Dad there." At the end of the year he realizes the artificiality of this assumption. "I was quite surprised. At the grade seven level I thought there might be a little 'I don't want my mommy here.' But they (the students) really enjoy it and, of course, if the parents think that school is important, there is a far greater chance that the children will too."

Collaborative and non-collaborative teachers differ in the extent to which power to influence the triadic relationship is left to the student. The former group of teachers takes ownership of the responsibility to establish

links between the two adult members of the triad. This is not to say that students in these classrooms have no responsibility for home-school liaison. They are accountable for having homework books signed and for taking home work portfolios for parent review, for instance. But they are not the sole link between home and school. Collaborative teachers act on a sentiment that Mr. Roy (NC), unfortunately, expresses in words but not deeds. When parents are brought into the relationship, it makes education "easier . . . for the kid, the parent, and the teacher, because there's three of you involved now instead of just two." This increases the likelihood of students being granted the opportunity and the power to succeed.

Teacher Change and the Collaborative/Non-Collaborative Teacher

This study set out with two purposes in mind: one, to determine and describe the attitudes and behaviours that constrain or enhance the formation of learning partnerships between and amongst teachers, students, and parents; and two, through an (admittedly weak) intervention to promote home-school partnerships with a focus on student learning at the grade six and seven level. As one comes to the end of a study one questions to what extent the goals were realized.

Certainly the first of the two goals has been realized. The portraits of the collaborative teachers give ample evidence of the attitudes and behaviours that bridge the distance between home and school and between members of the parent-student-teacher triad. This is an important outcome given the study's emphasis on the inside-out approach to school effectiveness and given the long term purpose of the larger project, which is to effect change that will promote school improvement.

The extent to which the study was successful in realizing its goal of promoting school-home partnerships depends on which group of teachers one focuses on. When planning studies of this sort, Henderson et al. (1978) encourage researchers to consider the following question: "Can you

realistically expect that the attitude objectives will have been achieved by the time you plan to do the measuring?" In examining the results of this work, the answer is yes and no. If one focuses on the collaborative teachers only, the answer to Henerson's question is "yes." If one focuses on the non-collaborative teachers, the answer is "no."

The next question, then, is "why the difference?" Some teachers who attended the workshop simply picked up and ran with the ideas and suggestions presented. As one member of the research group noted, it was as if all these teachers needed was a "gentle nudge" and home-school partnership practices were in place. For other teachers, the workshop, the publicly announced commitment to a chosen activity, and the follow-up meetings at which these activities were discussed led to limited, if any, change in either practice or attitude.

Some would argue that Guskey's (1986) work on teacher change would predict negative outcomes for this study. According to Guskey, change occurs in three stages: "change in the classroom practices of teachers, change in their beliefs and attitudes, and change in the learning outcomes of students" (p. 6). His model "posits that significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers (with respect to specific teaching practices) is contingent on their gaining evidence of change in the learning outcomes of their students" (p. 7). In this study evidence of desirable outcomes is extended to include positive feedback regarding student and parent attitudes toward learning and collaborative relationships. From Guskey's point of view, behavioural change precedes attitudinal change. Staff development policies, therefore, should reflect this emphasis.

There is a logic to Guskey's model that is appealing. And yet the model does not explain why some teachers in this study responded to suggested strategies to improve home-school partnerships and some did not. Smylie's (1988) work on teacher change, however, does speak to this finding. Smylie makes an important distinction. He differentiates between school-based staff development and that which is rooted in the individual teacher's commitment to ongoing professional growth—regardless of the presence or

absence of change efforts occurring at the school level. This distinction is important. It speaks to the importance of understanding: one, the context in which models of teacher change are generated; and two, the limitations those contexts impose on the generalizability of the model to other settings.

Smylie's work focuses specifically on staff development that is teacher-centred and for which there is "no pressure from administrators or teaching colleagues . . . to change . . . practice" (p. 25). This, he suggests, is "the autonomy generally associated with individual participation in staff development for the enhancement of teacher practice (cf. Schlechty & Whitford, 1983) and perhaps reflects the broader autonomy associated with individual teacher practice in most schools (Lortie, 1975; Weick, 1976)" (p. 25). In the context in which Smylie's work was conducted, teachers' belief in their ability to impact student learning was found to be the most significant predictor of teacher change. As Smylie notes, teachers who were most confident their professional practices would have the desired outcome were those who were most willing to change those practices. In this case, behavioural change is a consequence of pre-existing attitudes—a reversal of Guskey's model.

This observation fits the data reported here. Collaborative teachers are far more likely to speak with certainty of their ability to work effectively with students and of their relationship with parents. Smylie's model correctly predicts that these would be the teachers who would adopt new practices without imposition from above. In doing so, they create a chain reaction which, drawing of Guskey's model, increases the likelihood of new strategies being incorporated into everyday practice—in this case, efforts to promote home-school partnerships. This is to say, teachers receive feedback that their actions have desirable outcomes.

According to Metz (1993), "good teaching requires not only enormous skill and energy but also probably some visible confirmations for those efforts" (p. 130). The collaborative teacher receives that confirmation, which enhances the sense of professional efficacy, which, in turn, increases the likelihood that those new behaviours will become established patterns of

professional practice. Mr. Abrams (C) reports that students have a deeper understanding of a novel they are studying in class—a consequence of asking parents to read and discuss the book at home with their children. Mr. Vickers (C) receives feedback that causes him to say: "I've yet to have a parent come in who hasn't walked away with a more positive aspect toward school." With regard to his relationship with students he is convinced that although parents may not necessarily agree on how certain things are done in the school, they would agree that "he and the others on this staff all really care about kids." Ms. Quinton (C) reports that her weekly folder system has been well-received by parents. "I've had really positive response to those. . . . A number of parents have come in and said, 'hey, we're really pleased.'" Students, too, report the benefits of this practice both for themselves and for their parents.

It must be noted that although this study focuses on the importance of examining school effectiveness at the classroom level, it is acknowledged that it is unsatisfactory to confine suggestions for school improvement to that milieu. What the classroom focus permits is a closer examination of conditions that must be met for schools overall to improve. The findings, therefore, certainly remain applicable to the setting from which they derive, but they also inform staff development programs of the sort to which Guskey refers—that is to say, school-based initiatives.

Further to this point, ample evidence exists that speaks to the importance of the principal's role in creating a school environment where collaborative classrooms of the sort described here are more likely to be found (cf. Bossert et al., 1982; Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Van der Grift, 1990). The importance of Cuban's (1993) comments are acknowledged: "school and classroom effects have to be studied together because they interact with one another and create school climates that in turn affect how teachers get socialized within a school and what teachers do with their students" (p. x). The inside-out model of school improvement reduces the importance of school-wide issues, but does not render them irrelevant.

Alternative Interpretations

It is important to consider if alternative interpretations could explain the findings reported. Is it possible, for instance, that the collaborative/non-collaborative designation is simply a product of years in the profession? The answer is "no." Teachers with several years experience are just as likely to fall into either category. Mr. Abrams, Ms. Quaid, Ms. Quinton, Mr. Vickers, and Mr. Whiston are all collaborative teachers who have been teaching for at least five years. However, teachers with considerable classroom experience also fall within the non-collaborative group. These include Ms. Avril, Mr. Richards, Mr. Roy, and Ms. Billings. The collaborative/non-collaborative grouping is also divided amongst teachers new to the profession. Mr. Brooks, a first year teacher, is labeled collaborative; Mr. Ashdown, another first year teacher, non-collaborative. Length of service, then, does not determine placement.

It may also be asked if the catchment area accounts for between-classroom differences in home-school partnerships. This is more difficult to determine. Certainly those teachers who are particularly collaborative (Mr. Abrams, Ms. Quaid, and Ms. Quinton) are assigned to schools in more affluent areas than Mr. Simpson (NC), Mr. Roy (NC), and Mr. Richards (NC). And yet, this observation does not explain the within-school differences found between Mr. Abrams (C) and Ms. Avril (NC) and Mr. Ashdown (NC); or those between Mr. Brooks (C) and Ms. Billings (NC). Catchment area, then, does not predict collaborative/non-collaborative designations.

It must also be questioned how one filters out the effects of time on the development of collaborative links between home and school. Parent participants in Mr. Vickers' (C) and Ms. Quaid's (C) class comment on the benefits of time, reporting that the teacher-parent relationship improved during the course of the year. Mr. Roy (NC) does, as well, from a teacher's perspective. Interestingly, however, Time 1 qualitative data can be used to predict teacher placement on the collaborative/non-collaborative continuum at Time 2. Time, therefore, has the potential of solidifying home-school

relationships. It also has the capacity to affirm a parent's negative perceptions. In summary, distinctions made at Time 1 remain the same at Time 2.

Reconsiderations

Conceptual

The Classroom and the Triad as the Units of Analysis

In Chapter Two it was argued that the classroom is an appropriate focal point for effective schools research. The work reported here supports that assumption and thus the inside-out approach to school improvement referred to earlier.

With one exception, parents and students in this study do not discriminate amongst schools. They do, however, report differences amongst classrooms—and sometimes amongst classrooms within the same school. Within-school differences are common. As Little and McLaughlin (1993) explain, "within a given schoolhouse, each classroom is functionally independent" (p. 24). Given this study's interest in effecting change in teacher practices, it is interesting to note, as well, Little and McLaughlin's observation that this autonomy is noticeable when studying the outcomes of various school improvement efforts. They report that "even in programs in which operational success depended explicitly on strong coordination between levels, there is evidence that each functional unit—the district, the school building, or the classroom—simply appropriates the program at its level of operations and then buffers it from external intervention" (p. 24).

Focusing on the classroom rather than the school permits an examination of the "buffering" process to which Little and McLaughlin (1993) refer —a process that reveals interesting differences between collaborative and non-collaborative teachers in the extent to which they adopt strategies designed to promote home-school partnerships. It also reveals how one aspect of the study originally considered a weakness came to be viewed as a

strength. I am referring to the "weakness" of the intervention; that is to say, the laissez-faire manner with which teachers were left to select a parent involvement strategy for implementation in their respective classrooms. Although all teachers committed verbally and in public to a strategy, only a few (Ms. Quinton (C), Ms. Quaid (C), Mr. Abrams (C), and, to a lesser extent, Mr. Brooks (C) followed through. Upon analyzing the data, the "loose" approach to intervention was revealing: those who honoured the commitment to encourage home-school partnerships were noticeably different from their colleagues on a number of factors. They were those, who, for the most part, came to be labeled "collaborative." The "looseness" of the intervention, therefore, provided important data.

Differential acceptance of home-school partnership strategies by participating teachers substantiates Wang et al.'s (1993) finding that school improvement policies "do not always reach down to the classroom level" (p. 276). Because of this, efforts to improve schools must focus directly on the classroom, as ultimately change efforts "require implementation by teachers at the classroom and student level" (p. 276).

Teddlie and Stringfield's (1993) work also speaks to the importance of looking at classrooms and provides another reason for doing so. Their ten year study of school effects reveals that there is "greater evidence for the persistence of teacher effects than school effects" (p. 198). Once positive changes occur, they are more likely to endure at the classroom level than they are at the level of the school. To focus on the classroom, then, is prudent and provides a close-up view of teacher attitudes and behaviours that impact student satisfaction and learning that broad-sweeping, school-based studies cannot.

Having re-examined to the importance of the classroom as a unit of analysis, the emphasis placed on the triad must also be re-examined. As previously discussed, the qualitative data reveal between-classroom differences in the extent to which teachers are attitudinally predisposed to work collaboratively with students and parents and, in fact, do so. The quantitative analyses, while not always reaching statistical significance, in general

support the collaborative/non-collaborative distinctions made. Teachers, then, are recognizably different in this regard.

It must be noted, however, that the quantitative data also reveal considerable within classroom differences. This suggests that although teachers can be distinguished as being more or less collaborative, the degree to which a teacher is able to develop a collaborative relationship with any one parent and/or student depends upon circumstances particular to each individual triad and its constituent members. The amount of variance emphasizes the importance of focusing on the triad. Given that the classroom is an aggregation of triads, the better we understand the barriers and bridges to collaboration at that level, the better we understand classroom conditions, and by extension school conditions, that facilitate academically and socially satisfying relationships between and amongst students, teachers, and parents.

Collaboration Revisited

During data analysis a question emerged that merits further consideration. It is the extent to which teacher respect for students determines the extent to which teachers pursue collaborative relationships with parents. At the outset of this study, the relationship between teacher and parent in some important ways did not take the student into account—apart from the belief that a partnership between the two impacts students positively. Although we began with the intent of learning student opinion, and indeed achieved that goal, the role the student plays in the triadic relationship was not fully understood. Initially, it was thought that the teacher-parent connection was direct. During data analysis, however, it seemed that the emergence of the triadic relationship was a function of teacher respect for students. That is to say, the linkage between teacher and parent was mediated through teacher respect for students. It is collaborative teachers who speak of and demonstrate respect for students in ways their non-collaborative counterparts do not.

Such observations cause one to reconsider the notion of collaboration and question how understanding of the concept has changed as a consequence of this research. The belief that collaboration at its best is a blend of positive attitudes towards parents and students and proactive behaviours is strengthened. For teachers, it is a matter of conveying to parents that they value parental assistance in understanding the needs of the child and welcome their support with school-related learning activities in the home. They not only welcome their support, they provide parents with specific information that allows them to maximize the potential benefit of the curriculum of the home. In their relationships with students, they balance the needs of the individual student with the needs of the group in such a way that each benefits. This research emphasizes the importance of going beyond teacher self-report data and of measuring not only attitudes but behaviours as well. Without the opportunity to compare teacher attitudes against behaviours and teacher perceptions against those of students and parents, erroneous notions of the extent to which teachers were truly collaborative would be formed.

For parents, the collaborative relationship is perceived to be in place when teachers: convey the attitude that parents are respected members of a teacher-parent partnership; ask for assistance in a way that conveys a mutual interest in and respect for the child; provide information regarding student progress, both academically and socially; provide specific information on how to nurture growth in either or both areas; and provide opportunities for the two adult members of the triad, or indeed all members of the triad, to communicate either within or beyond school hours. It is interesting to note that although parents appreciate teachers keeping them informed of what their children are learning, when tests are to be taken, and when assignments are due, very few express the belief that teachers ought to be providing this information on a regular basis. This information is appreciated but not expected. Nor is it expected that teachers would or should make themselves available throughout the year beyond regular school hours. For those who work outside the home, this limits the opportunity for parents and teachers to consult, but no parent mentions that

things should be otherwise. The lack of expectation on the part of parents is striking. It is not for lack of interest in their child's well-being. It is rather an indication that parents feel they have no right to these expectations.

For students, the ideal collaborative relationship exists when teachers provide a learning environment which allows to students: to work hard; to learn things that they have not learned before; and to work co-operatively with classmates by allowing them to help one another. Students perceive collaborative teachers as: treating all students fairly both academically and socially; treating all students with respect; and honouring the resources or the curriculum of the home. At the outset of this study, one indicator of student-teacher collaboration was thought to be the extent to which students would have the opportunity to choose their own learning activities. Students appreciated some flexibility in this regard, but the issues noted above were far more salient.

Methodological

Sample

Although the number of parent-student dyads interviewed from each classroom was limited, there is, nonetheless, evidence of a variety of parent and student perspectives. The qualitative sample included parents: who were well-educated and those who felt inhibited by lack of education; who were gainfully employed outside the home and those who were not; who felt comfortable dealing with the school and those who did not, regardless of level of education or professional status; and those who viewed the school and, in particular, the teacher positively and those who did not.

Students, too, represented a range of characteristics: from those who enjoyed school to those who thought it a waste of time; from those who were co-operative in class to those who caused the teacher difficulty; from those who excelled at academic work to those who struggled with it; and from those who demonstrated commitment to the school's goals and activities to those who did not. In spite of these differences, there was considerable con-

vergence of opinion across collaborative and non-collaborative classrooms. There is no question, however, that the validity of the findings would be strengthened if more extensive interviewing within classrooms were to be done. This would increase the opportunity to access a wider range of opinions and/or corroborate the opinions expressed by others.

The same can be said of the within-classroom quantitative sample. While there was reasonably high participation in some classrooms (72%), it was more limited in others (36%). The total numbers (162) were useful for analyses done at the level of the referent group (i.e., all parents or all students). However, the quantitative analyses conducted at the level of the classroom would also benefit from greater student and parent participation. Given the commitment to voluntary participation, however, it is difficult to determine to what extent numbers could be expanded. If the study were to shift to a school-based focus with strong principal support, it is possible that more parents could be recruited. But that, of course, would take away from an important feature of this work, the focus on the classroom. All this having been said, the congruence of findings across data sources speaks to the validity of the outcomes; as does the congruence with research conducted in the areas of school effectiveness and models of school learning.

The issue of voluntary participation is an important one, however, and not only from the point of view of numbers. The real concern, and the one that applies to this study as much as any other, has to do with the effects of self-selection and how that impacts generalizability. Any attempt to generalize the findings reported here beyond this sample must bear this caution in mind.

Data Collection Instruments and Analysis

Another reconsideration focuses on the data collection instruments. The fact that interview data were better able to discriminate amongst classrooms suggests the need to recraft survey items. The benefit of a long term study, of which this work is a part, is that it provides an opportunity to do

just that. Instruments administered in subsequent years, both survey and interview schedules, reflect a more refined understanding of what constitutes the collaborative home-school partnership from the perspectives of all three members of the triad. Year Four work will, for instance, test the hypothesis that teacher regard for students precedes and facilitates teacher-initiated efforts to establish a learning-focused, collaborative rapport with parents.

It also recommended that in future separate scales be created to measure attitudes and behaviours. When items measuring both are collapsed within a single scale, the result is a lack of conceptual clarity that interferes with the interpretation of results.

Data Collection Procedures

There are many benefits to working with a research team. One of these is that it increases the number of sites that can be accessed and serviced. There is an attendant disadvantage, however. The greater the number of researchers/interviewers, the greater the spread of interviewing skill. As noted previously, although all members of the research team participated in group training sessions, transcripts revealed differences in the extent to which interviewers were able to elicit information from respondents. An anticipated question is: "to what extent does this affect the validity of the findings reported?" Differences in interviewers' skill resulted in less detailed information in some cases, but the information received was consistent with that elicited from other respondents within a given classroom and within the collaborative/non-collaborative category overall. Year Four of the larger project (1993-94), the year most directly influenced by this work, benefits from identifying skillful interviewers and using transcripts of their interviews to guide the collection of qualitative data.

Conclusion

In her book, *Home Advantage,* Lareau (1989) asks of her own work: "Can we learn anything from a study of two first grade classes, twelve families, four teachers, and two principals?" Her answer: "Yes, I think we can use a small, non-random sample to improve conceptual models" (p. 218). I agree. Focusing on the teacher profiles, which formed the major part of this work, it must be acknowledged that this study, too, used a small, non-random sample. It nonetheless permitted a kind of scrutiny of school life that is typically absent from the effective schools literature.

The next question, of course, is: given the small sample, how trustworthy are the findings? It is argued that trustworthiness emerges from two sources: one, the consistency with which the qualitative data reveal common themes across collaborative and non-collaborative classrooms; and two, the extent to which these findings are consistent with those reported in the literature at large (cf., Mortimore, 1993; Smylie, 1988; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg,1993).

The work reported here illuminates the importance of Wang et al.'s finding that certain proximal factors are critical to student and parent satisfaction with school or, more specifically, with particular classroom teachers. The characteristics of the collaborative teacher and the kind of relationships they establish help us to understand why this is so. Typically, there is no evidence within the triad of the barrier to home-school partnerships to which Lightfoot (1978) refers: that is the distinction between the interests and roles of the school and those of the family. The collaborative teacher has the ability to balance the well-being of the group and the best interests of the child, the concern for the individual student is obvious to the parents, and creates and sustains their commitment to the collaborative relationship.

With regard to student well-being, Sprinthall (1985) cautions that sometimes there is a tendency to "think that young teenagers will somehow unfold magically" and that when adults provide "almost no good examples

of formal or informal growth enhancing activities," they forget or refuse to accept "that if we abdicate our responsibilities for effective education, other groups . . . will fill the vacuum" (p. 543, cited in Eccles & Midgley, 1979, p. 176). Collaborative teachers do not abdicate responsibility. Furthermore, through their actions they better position students and parents to honour theirs.

References

Andreski, S. (1983). On the uses of comparative analysis. *Reviewing Sociology, 2*(6).

Andrews, R. L. (1987). The school-community interface: Strategies of community involvement. In J. Goodlad (Ed.), *The ecology of school renewal. Eighty-sixth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part 1.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Atkin, J., & Bastiani, J. (1985). *Preparing teachers to work with parents: A survey of initial training.* Nottingham: University School of Education.

Atkin, J., & Bastiana, J., with Goode, J. (1988). *Listening to parents: An approach to the improvement of home-school relations.* New York: Croom Helm.

Ball, S. (1985). Participant observation with pupils. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *Strategies of educational research: Qualitative methods* (pp. 23–53). Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Barr, R., & Dreeben, R. (1983). *How schools work.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Baskwill, J. (1989). *Parents and teachers: Partners in learning.* Toronto: Scholastic Press.

Becher, R. McS. (1984). *Parent involvement: A review of research and principles of successful practice.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Becker, H. (1981). *Teacher practices of parent involvement at home: A statewide survey.* A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Becker, H. J., & Epstein, J. (1982). *Influences on teacher's use of parent involvement.* (Report No. 324). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Blase, J. J. (1987, Winter). Dimensions of effective school leadership: The teacher's perspective. *American Educational Research Journal, 24*(4), 589–610.

Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. O. (1989). Educational research: An introduction (Fifth Edition). New York: Longman.

Bossert, S. T. (1988). School effects. In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (pp. 341–352). New York: Longman.

Bossert, S., Dwyer, D., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. (1982). The instructional management role of the principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 18*(3), 34–64.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecologoy of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Campbell, D. T. (1975). Degrees of freedom and the case study. *Comparative Political Studies, 8*(2), 178–193.

Caracelli, V. J., & Greene, J. C. (1993). Data analysis strategies for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15*(2), 195–207.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. (1989). *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 2lst Century: The Report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents*. New York: Author.

Chavkin, N. F., & Williams, D. L. (1985). *Parent involvement in education*. Final Report. December 1984–November 1985. Austin, TX: Southwest Education Development Laboratory.

Chrispeels, J. (1992, September). *Using an effective schools framework to build home-school partnerships for student success.* (Occasional Paper). Madison, WI: The National Center for Effective Schools, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cohen, M. (1983). Instructional management and social conditions in effective schools. In A. O. Webb & L. D. Webb (Eds.), *School finance and school improvement: Linkages in the 1980's* (pp. 17–50). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Cole, A. L., & Knowles, J. G. (1993). Teacher development partnership research: A focus on methods and issues. *American Educational Research Journal, 30*(3), 473–495.

Coleman, J. S. (1987). Families and schools. *Educational Researcher, 16*(6), 32–38.

Coleman, P. (1993). Testing the school system: Dropouts, accountability, and social policy. *Curriculum Inquiry, 23*(3), 329–342.

Coleman, P., & LaRocque, L. (1990). *Struggling to be "good enough": Administrative practices and school district ethos*. London: Falmer Press.

Connell, R. W., Ashenden, D. J., Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G. W. (1982). *Making the difference: Schools, families, and school division*. Boston: George Allen & Unwin.

Constas, M. A. (1992). Qualitative analysis as a public event: The documentation of category development procedures. *American Education Research Journal, 29*(2), 253–266.

Cronbach, L. J. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist, 30*(2), 116–127.

Cuban, L. (1993). Foreword. In C. Teddlie & S. Stringfield (Eds.), *Schools make a difference; Lessons learned from a 10-year study of school effects* (pp. ix–xi). New York: Teachers College Press.

Cusson, R., & Hedges, H. (1978). *Volunteers in Halton schools*. Unpublished Report: Ontario Institute of Studies in Education.

Cutright, M. (1984, November). How wide open is the door to parent involvement in the schools? *PTA Today*, 10–11.

Cyster, R., Clift, P. S., & Battle, S. (1979). *Parental involvement in primary schools*. Windsor, Berks, England: NFER.

Cziko, G. (1989). Unpredictablility and indeterminism in human behavior: Arguments and implications for educational research. *Educational Researcher, 18*(3), 17–25.

Davies, D. (1987). Parent involvement in the public schools: Opportunities for administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(2), 119–135.

Davies, D. (Ed.). (1981). *Communities and their schools*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Davis, G. A., & Thomas, M. A. (1989). *Effective schools and effective teachers*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Dembo, M. H., & Gibson, S. (1985). Teachers' sense of efficacy: An important factor in school achievement. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*(2), 173–184.

Driscoll, M. E. (1992). School-community relations and school effectiveness. In R. L. Crowson (Ed.), *School-community relations under reform* (pp. 105–128). Berkeley: McCutchan.

Dye, J. (1989). Parental involvement in curriculum matters: Parents, teachers and children working together. *Educational Research, 31*(1), 20–33.

Eccles, J. S., & Midgely, C. (1989). Stage-environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for early adolescents. In R. E. Ames & C. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education (Vol. 3)* (pp. 139–186). New York: Academic Press.

Epstein, J. L. (1990). Single parents and the schools: Effects of marital status on parent and teacher interactions. In M. T. Hallinan, D. M. Klein, & J. Glass (Eds.), *Change in societal institutions* (pp. 91–120). New York: Plenum.

Epstein, J. L. (1987). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(2), 119–136.

Epstein, J. L. (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 86*(3), 277–294.

Epstein, J. L. (1983). Longitudinal effects of family-school-person interactions on student outcomes. *Research in Sociology of Education and Socialization, 4*, 101–127.

Epstein, J. L. (1982). *Student reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement*. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Epstein, J.L. & Becker, H.J. (1987). Hopkins surveys of school and family connections: Questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students. Parent Involvement Series, Report 1–81. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein, J. L. & Becker, H. J. (1982, November). Teacher reported practices of parent involvement: Problems and possibilities. *The Elementary School Journal, 83*(2), 103–113.

Epstein, J., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), 289–305.

Fantini, M. (1980). *Community particiption: Alternative patterns and their consequence on educational achievement*. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1990). Some moral considerations on teaching as a profession. In J. I. Goodlad, R. Soder, K. A. Sirotnik (Eds.), *The moral dimensions of teaching* (pp. 130–151). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fielding, N. G., & Fielding, J. L. (1986). *Linking Data*. London: Sage.

Finn, J. D. (1989, Summer). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59*(2), 117–142.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. Toronto: OISE Press.

Fullan, M. (1982). *The meaning of educational change*. Toronto: OISE Press.

Gable, R. (1986). *Instrument development in the affective domain*. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Glesne, G., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Longman.

Goldenberg, C. (1989). Parents' effects on academic grouping for reading: Three case studies. *American Educational Research Journal, 26*(3), 329–352.

Goodlad, J. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of world-making*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Gordon, I. (1978). *What does research say about the effects of parent involvement in schools?* Occasional papers, School of Education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff development and the process of teacher change. *Educational Researcher, 15*(5), 5–11.

Hawley, W., & Rosenholtz, S. (1984). Good schools: What research says about improving student achievement (Special Issue). *Peabody Journal of Education, 61*(4).

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986, May). The social context of effective schools. *American Journal of Education, 94*(3), 328–355.

Henderson, A. T. (1987). *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement*. Columbia, Maryland: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. T., Marburger, C. L., and Ooms, T. (1986). *Beyond the bake sale*. Columbia: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, M. E., Morris, L. L., & Fitz-Gibbon, C. T. (1986). *How to measure attitudes*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hesse-Biber, S., Dupuis, P., & Kinder, T. S. (1991). HyperRESEARCH: A computer program for the analysis of qualitative data with an emphasis on hypothesis testing and multimedia analysis. *Qualitative Sociology, 14*(4), 289–306.

Hobbs, N., Dokecki, P. R., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Moroney, R. M., Shayne, M. W., & Weeks, K. H. (1984). *Strengthening families.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., and Brissie, J. S. (1987). Parent involvement: Contributions of teacher efficacy, school socioeconomic status, and other school characteristics. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(3), 417–435.

Howe, K. R. (1985). Two dogmas of educational research. *Educational Researcher, 14*(8), 10–18.

Hulsebosch, P. L. (1989). Beauty in the eye of the beholder: Teachers' perspectives on parent involvement. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Jaeger, R. M. (Ed.). (1988). *Complementary methods for research in education.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.

Jones, B. A. (1989). Factor related to effective community based organization intervention in dropout prevention. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, Columbus, OH.

Jowett, S., & Baginsky, M. M. (1991). *Building bridges.* London: NFER-Nelson Publishing.

Krathwohl, D. R. (1985). *Social and behavioral science research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kruglanski, A. (1989). *Lay epistemics and human knowledge: Cognitive and motivational bases.* New York: Plenum Press.

Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage.* London: Falmer Press.

Lazarsfeld, P. (1935). The art of asking why: Three principles underlying the formulation of questionnaires. *National Marketing Review, 1*(1), 1–7.

Levine, B. (1992). Dealing with dropouts in Canadian education. *Curriculum Inquiry, 22*(3), 257–270.

Levine, D., & Lezotte, L. (1990). *Unusually effective schools: A review of research and practice.* Madison, WI: National Centre for Effective Schools Research and Development.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1981). Toward conflict and resolution: Relationships between families and schools. *Theory Into Practice, 20*(2), 97–103.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1978). *Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools*. New York: Basic Books.

Little, B. (1994, January 17). Why it pays to stay in school. *The Globe and Mail,* p. A7.

Lloyd, D. (1978). Prediction of school failure from third grade data. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 38*(4), 1193–1200.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mackenzie, D. E. (1983, April). Research for school improvement: An appraisal of some recent trends. *Educational Researcher, 12*(4), 6–16.

McAfee, O. (1987). Improving home-school relations: Implications for staff development. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(2), 185–199.

McDill, E. L., Rigsby, L., & Meyers, E. (1969, April). *Educational climates of high schools: Their effects and sources.* John Hopkins University Center for the Study of Social Organzation of Schools. Baltimore, MD.

McGeeney, P. (1980). The involvement of parents. In M. Craft, J. Raynor, & L. Cohen (Eds.), *Linking home and school.* London: Harper and Row.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*(2), 171–178.

McLaughlin, M. W., & Yee, S. M-I. (1988). School as a place to have a career. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools* (pp. 23–44). New York: Teachers College Press.

Marrett, C. B. (1990). The changing composition of schools: Implications for school organization. In M. T. Hallinen, D. M. Klein, & J. Glass (Eds.), *Change in societal institutions* (pp. 71–90). New York: Plenum Press.

Martin, J. R. (1992). *The schoolhome: Rethinking schools for changing families.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Merton, R. K. (1975). Structural analysis in sociology. In P. Blau (Ed.), *Approaches to the study of social structure.* New York: Free Press.

Metz, M. H. (1993). Teachers' ultimate dependence on their students. In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.). *Teachers' work: Individuals,*

colleagues, and contexts (pp. 104–136). New York: Teachers College Press.

Mich, P. T., Milojevic, S., Nardine, F. E. (1990). *Can community agency, school, home collaboration enhance attitudes of at-risk families? The Riis School-Rice Center urban education partnership.* A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.

Miles, M. G., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods.* London: Sage.

Miller, S. E., Leinhardt, G., & Zigmond, N. (1988). Influencing engagement through accommodation: An ethnographic study of at-risk students. *American Educational Research Journal, 25*(4), 465–487.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Moles, O. C. (1987). Who wants parent involvement? Interest, skills and opportunities among parents and educators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(2), 137–145.

Moles, O. C. (1982). Synthesis of recent research on parent involvement in children's education. *Educational Leadership, 40*(2), 44–47.

Morgan, G. (1983). Knowledge, uncertainty and choice. In G. Morgan (Ed.), *Beyond method: Strategies for social research* (pp. 383–391). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Mortimore, P. (1993). School effectiveness and the management of effective learning and teaching. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement,* 4(4), 290–310.

Mortimer, J., & Mortimore, P. (1984). Parents and school: Education special report. *Education 5th October.*

Mosenthal, P. B. (1985). Defining progress in educational research. *Educational Researcher, 14*(9), 3–9.

National Education Association. (1981). *National teacher opinion poll.* Washington, DC: Author.

Partington, J., & Wragg, T. (1989). *Schools and parents.* London: Cassell.

Patton, M. Q. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation.* London: Sage.

Phillips, D. C. (1983). After the wake: Postpositivistic educational thought. *Educational Researcher, 12*(5), 4–12.

Powell, D. R. (1978). Correlates of parent-teacher communication frequency and diversity. *Journal of Educational Research, 71,* 333–341.

Power, T. J. (1985). Perceptions of competence: How parents and teachers view each other. *Psychology in the Schools, 22,* 68–78.

Pugh, G. (1989). Pre-school services: Is partnership possible? In S. Wolfendale (Ed.), *Parental involvement: Developing networks between school, home and community*. London: Cassell Educational Limited.

Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1982). Too soon to cheer: Synthesis of research on effective schools. *Educational Leadership, 83*(4), 64–69.

Raddysh, J. (1992). *Fading out: A comparison of the elementary school experience of high school graduates and high school drop-outs.* Unpublished master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.

Redding, S. (1992). *Parent scale to measure the efficacy of strategies to enhance the curriculum of the home.* A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Reichardt, C. S., & Cook, T. D. (1979). Beyond qualitative versus quantitative methods. In T. D. Cook and C. S. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research* (pp. 7–32). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Report of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. (1992, May). *Current research and development. No. 2.*

Report of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. (1992, February). *Current research and development. No. 1.*

Rist, R. C. (1977). On the relations among educational research paradigms: From disdain to detente. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 8,* 42–49.

Rizo, F. M. (1991). The controversy about quantification in social research: An extension of Gage's "historical sketch." *Educational Researcher, 20*(9), 9–12.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools.* New York: Longman.

Salomon, G. (1991, Aug.-Sept.). Transcending the qualitative-quantitative debate: The analytic and systematic approaches to educational research. *Educational Researcher, 20*(6), 10–18.

Sarason, S. B. (1990). *The predictable failure of educational reform.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schlechty, P., & Whitford, B. (1983). The organization context of school systems and the functions of staff development. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Staff development: Eight-second yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II* (pp. 62–91). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schwab, J. J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *School Review, 78*(1), 1–23.

Schwandt, T. (1989). Solutions to the paradigm conflict: Coping with uncertainty. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 17*(4), 379–407.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Teaching alone, learning together: Needed agendas for the new reforms. A paper prepared for the conference on Restructuring Schooling for Quality Education, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas.

Siu, S-F. (1992). *Toward an understanding of Chinese-American educational achievement.* Report No. 2. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.

Sirotnick, K. A. (1987). Evaluation in the ecology of schooling: The process of school renewal. In J. Goodlad (Ed.), *The ecology of school renewal. The Eighty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smylie, M. A. (1988). The enhancement function of staff development: Organizational and psychological antecedents of individual teacher change. *American Educational Research Journal, 25*(1), 1–30.

Stallworth, J. T., & Williams, D. (1981). Parent involvement training in elementary teacher preparation. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles.

Stevenson, D. L., & Baker, D. P. (1987). The family-school relationship and the child's school performance. *Child Development, 58*(5), 1348–1357.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* London: Sage.

Sykes, G. (1990). Fostering teacher professionalism in schools. In R. Elmore & Associates (Eds.), *Restructuring schools: The next generation of educational reform* (pp. 59–96). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Teddlie, C., & Stringfield, S. (1993). *Schools make a difference: Lessons learned from a 10-year study of school effects.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Tizard, B., & Hughes, M. (1984). *Young children learning.* London: Fontana.

Van der Grift, W. (1990). Educational leadership and academic achievement in elementary education. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 1*, 26–40.

Vernberg, E. M., & Medway, F. J. (1981). Teacher and parent causal perceptions of school problems. *American Educational Research Journal, 18*(1), 29–37.

Walberg, H. J. (1984). Families as partners in educational productivity. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(6), 397–400.

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. (1993). Toward a knowledge base for school learning. *Review of Educational Research, 63*(3), 249–294.

Weatherly, R. (1979). *Reforming special education: Policy implementation from state level to street level.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Weinstein, R. S. (1993). Children's knowledge of differential treatment in school: Implications for motivation. In T. M. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Motivating students to learn* (pp. 197–244). Berkeley: McCutchan.

Weick, K. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely-coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21*, 1–19.

Welker, R. (1991). Expertise and the teacher as expert: Rethinking a questionable metaphor. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*(1), 19–35.

Witte, J. F., & Walsh, D. J. (1990, Summer). A systematic test of the effective schools model. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. 12*(2), 188–212.

Youniss, J., & Smollar, J. (1985). *Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers, and friends.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zelditch, M., Jr. (1962). Some methodological problems of field studies. *American Journal of Sociology, 67*(5), 566–576.

Appendix 4.1
District and School Portraits

Site One: District Description

Site One is a relatively large district, both in terms of the student population it serves and its geographic range. 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 socio-economic level of the various communities within this district ranges from low to high. A considerable number of students are bussed to the school, and there is a good mix of students from urban and rural backgrounds. Five elementary schools in this catchment area participated in this study.

Site One: Description of Schools

Radmore Elementary, which provided 2 classrooms, serves families from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. It is unique from other schools in the sample in that it offers a French Immersion program for which French is the language of instruction. Students in the English track are able to walk to school. However a substantial number of French Immersion live beyond the school's normal catchment area and are driven to and from school by their parents.

Scramstad Elementary is a smaller school and contributed one classroom to the study. There are sharp socio-economic differences within its catchment area. Many of the children come from lower income families. Although many others come from newly developed middle class neighbourhoods and from one residential development considered to be quite

exclusive. The student population has a reputation of being reasonably challenging, and teacher turnover is high.

Quadra Elementary, which provided two classes, serves a solidly middle class residential community containing perhaps the most exclusive neighbourhood in the city. The 350 students attending Quadra are able to walk to and from school but few go home for lunch. Among the 19 teachers, turnover is low, and the school has a reputation in the district for having fewer discipline problems than other elementary schools. Quadra also has a reputation for having a parent community that takes an active interest in the education of its children, with many parents who do not hesitate to make their views known.

Valleyview contributed one classroom to the study. It is located in a rural community approximately thirty kilometres outside the district's main population centre. The families that make up this community farm and raise livestock either on a full- or part-time basis, work in the local forest industry, or commute to the city for employment. Most of the approximately 200 children who attend this school are bussed in, some from a considerable distance. Valleyview has a reputation in the district for having strong support from a fairly tightly knit community. The principal and most of the ten teachers commute from the city.

Walnut Grove supplied one classroom to the research project. It sits 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. Walnut Grove has a generally good reputation amongst parents, and the community is perceived to be very supportive of the school.

Site Two: District Description

Site Two is a medium-sized school-district located in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area. Most residents commute to jobs in the city, but a number are employed in the town itself, mainly in service industries. There is agricultural land surrounding the main population centre. Those who live in these areas have chosen a rural lifestyle—often working hobby farms—but are generally employed locally or in the city. Most of the schools in the district are located within the main population centre, with a few scattered throughout the more rural areas. The community has grown rapidly over the past few years, resulting in an influx of new residents.

Site Two: Description of Schools

Avondale School contributed three classrooms to the study, each a grade six/seven split. It opened three years ago in a newly constructed subdivision approximately two kilometres from the town centre. During the time the school was participating in the study, there were several portable classrooms on site. Planning for a new wing was already underway with construction to begin in the near future. Avondale School serves a solidly middle class community; some of the residents travel to the city to work, others are employed locally. Most of the students who attend this school walk from their nearby homes, although some are bussed in from the rural area to the north. Avondale School has a reputation in the district for being fairly progressive and for having a parent population that is supportive.

Brookfield Elementary supplied two classrooms: one a grade six/seven split; the other a straight grade seven. The school, which is located approximately one kilometre from the town centre, is in a residential area. The district's largest high school is directly across the street. The neighbourhoods surrounding Brookfield are older than those surrounding Avondale. Brookfield, itself, was built approximately 30 years ago. It serves families from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. All 350 students live within walking distance of the school. They come from nearby homes or from a cluster of apartment buildings near the town centre. The

student population is regarded as somewhat challenging and includes a number of integrated special needs students for which the school is quite well-known in the district.

Note: I acknowledge the work of Dan Domes and Yvonne Tabin in preparing the district and school portraits for Site 1 and Site 2 respectively.

Appendix 4.2
Co-Production of Learning Project Student Survey

This appendix includes the Student Survey administered at Time 1. It also notes (in italics) the changes made for Time 2.

The original surveys had an area between each question where participants could make additional comments—that space has been removed for the purpose of this appendix.

site	cl	pers		no

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Student Survey

- Please try to answer **every question** by circling the most appropriate response.
- If you do not have the information you need to answer the question, leave it blank.
- Use the spaces between the questions to tell us more.

		Agree Strongly 1	Agree 2	Not Sure 3	Disagree 4	Disagree Strongly 5
1.	I let my parent(s) know about school events and activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My parent(s) feel comfortable talking to my teacher about my progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I let my parent(s) know about things that happen in class.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My teacher lets my parent(s) know about our work in class.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My teacher lets my parent(s) know about what I am learning in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My teacher lets my parent(s) know about my homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My teacher spends time talking to me individually about my schoolwork when it is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My parent(s) encourage me to do my best work in school.	1	2	3	4	5

9.	My parent(s) rarely talk to me about how well I am doing in school. *T2: My parents often talk to me about how I am doing in school.*	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My parent(s) want me to participate actively in all classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I let my parent(s) know what homework I have.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I talk to my parent(s) about my plans for the future. *T2: I talk to my parents about my plans for school in the future.*	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I feel comfortable asking my parents for help with my homework.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My friends and I talk about our future plans, for school and after.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My teacher gives us opportunities to make suggestions about activities in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My teacher asks me to help other students with work in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel comfortable talking to my parents about school work.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I do things in class that make my teacher angry. *T2: I quite often do things in class that make my teacher angry.*	1	2	3	4	5
19.	When I am having trouble with something in class I feel free to ask other students for help.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	It is important to my teacher that I understand my homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I get in trouble at school for not getting my homework done. *T2: I sometimes get in trouble at school for not getting my homework done.*	1	2	3	4	5
22.	My parent(s) want my teacher to tell them about what I'm learning in school.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My parent(s) expect me to tell them when I am having problems in the classroom. *T2: My parents often talk to me about how I am doing in school.*	1	2	3	4	5

24. My parent(s) make sure my teacher knows when they think things are going well for me in school.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel comfortable making suggestions to my teacher about activities we could do in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
26. It is important to my friends at school that they have their assignments done on time.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I don't stay home from school unless I'm really sick.	1	2	3	4	5
28. It's important to me that my teacher knows that I am doing my best in school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. My friends don't stay home from school unless they are really sick.	1	2	3	4	5
30. My teacher is interested in hearing my opinions even when I disagree with her/him.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I don't worry about being late for school. *T2 I worry when I am late for school.*	1	2	3	4	5
32. It's important to me that my parent(s) know that I am doing my best in school.	1	2	3	4	5
33. It bothers me if I am late handing in assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
34. How well I do in school depends upon how hard I work.	1	2	3	4	5
35. My parents remind me to get my homework done. *T2 My parent(s) usually check to see that my homework is done.*	1	2	3	4	5
36. I feel proud of my school.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I have lots of friends at school. *T2 This item was deleted and was replaced with a rewording of item 51.*	1	2	3	4	5
38. I usually choose not to participate in voluntary activities at school. *T2 I usually participate in voluntary activities at school.*	1	2	3	4	5

39. I enjoy helping other students in the class with their schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5
T2 When my friends are having trouble with schoolwork, I usually feel able to help them.					
40. I get help from my teacher when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I stay away from school whenever I can.	1	2	3	4	5
42. If I do well on a test, it's usually because I "lucked out" on it.	1	2	3	4	5
T2 If I do well on a test, it's usually because I got lucky on it.					
43. How well I do in school depends upon how much help I get.	1	2	3	4	5
44. My parents help me with my schoolwork as much as they can.	1	2	3	4	5
45. When I do well on a difficult assignment it is usually because I worked hard.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I enjoy staying after school to participate in school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
T2 I stay after school to participate in school activities when I can.					
47. When I don't do well on an assignment, I usually feel that I can do better next time.	1	2	3	4	5
48. When I make up my mind to do well in school I usually succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
49. When I can, I avoid talking to my parents about school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
T2 I don't like talking to my parent(s) about school activities.					
50. I feel that I have the ability to do well in school if I want to.	1	2	3	4	5
51. My parents believe that it is important for me to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
T2 This became item 37 in Time 2 and was reworded to read: My parent(s) tell me that it is important for me to do well in school.					

52. If you were giving this school an overall rating as a place for you to learn, on a scale of 1 to 9 (1 = very poor, 9 = excellent) what rating would you assign?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (circle one)

We have asked a lot of questions about how you feel about school and schoolwork. Did we forget something important? Tell us about it here:

Thank you very much for the help you have provided with this survey.

Appendix 4.3
Co-Production of Learning Project Parent Survey

This appendix includes the Parent Survey administered at Time 1. It also notes (in italics) the changes made for Time 2.

The original surveys had an area between each question where participants could make additional comments—that space has been removed for the purpose of this appendix.

site	cl	pers	no	

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Parent Survey

- Please try to answer **every question** by circling the most appropriate response.
- If you do not have the information you need to answer the question, leave it blank.
- Use the spaces between the questions to tell us more.

		Agree Strongly 1	**Agree 2**	**Not Sure 3**	**Disagree 4**	**Disagree Strongly 5**
1.	I talk to my child about school events/activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I call/visit my child's teacher(s) to talk about my child's progress.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My child keeps me informed about classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I encourage my child always to do his/her best work in school.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My child's teacher(s) provides information about instructional programs so that I understand my child's schoolwork. *T2 My child's teacher(s) provides information about programs so I understand my child's schoolwork.*	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My child talks to me about his/her plans for schooling in the future.	1	2	3	4	5

9. I talk to my child's teacher(s) about the instructional program in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The instructional program in our school helps to motivate students.	1	2	3	4	5
T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with the following: My child's teacher(s) gives me useful ideas about how I can help my child learn at home.					
11. I leave it up to my child to decide whether or not to participate actively in classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with the following: It is important to me that my child does well in school.					
12. My child lets me know when s/he is having problems in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
T2: I talk to my child about my plans for school in the future.					
13. My child usually discusses homework with me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is important for my child to participate actively in extracurricular activities.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about what my child is learning in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My child's teacher(s) makes sure my child understands homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My child keeps me informed about school activities.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I make sure to tell my child's teacher(s) when I think things are going well.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My child's teacher(s) informs me when my child is doing well in class.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My child's teacher(s) spends time talking to my child individually.	1	2	3	4	5
T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with the following: My child's teacher(s) usually gives me an overview of what my child will be learning in the year.					
21. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's work in class.	1	2	3	4	5

22. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's homework.	1	2	3	4	5
23. My child feels comfortable approaching teacher(s) with schoolwork questions or concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Students are excited about learning in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's behaviour in class.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Students in our school have the necessary ability to achieve well in basic skills.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's work in class, if necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The academic emphasis in our school is challenging to students.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's homework, if necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Students are proud of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's behaviour, if necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Our school reflects the values of the community in which it is located.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I feel satisfied with my interviews with my child's teacher(s). *T2: My interviews with my child's teacher(s) give me good information about my child's progress.*	1	2	3	4	5
34. Parents in this school set high standards of achievement for their children. *T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with: My child's teacher(s) usually lets me know how my child is doing before report card time.*	1	2	3	4	5
35. My child's school provides ample opportunity for me to attend school functions. *T2 This item was deleted. It was replaced with: My child's teacher(s) usually sends home a list of projects to be completed in the coming months.*	1	2	3	4	5

36. Teachers make schoolwork interesting for students in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
37. My child's teacher(s) makes me feel part of a team.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Parents are given information in advance of any changes in this school. *T2 This item was deleted. It was replaced with: My own education prepared me well to help my child with schoolwork.*	1	2	3	4	5
39. My child's teacher(s) seems interested in hearing my opinions about my child.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Parents find teachers easily approachable at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
41. My child's teacher(s) seems interested in matters concerning my child. *T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with: It is important to me that my child graduate from high school.*	1	2	3	4	5
42. It is important to inform the teacher(s) when things are going well for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
43. My child is usually happy to go to school.	1	2	3	4	5
44. My child's teacher(s) makes time to talk to me when it is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Our school is an important part of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
46. My child feels comfortable asking the teacher(s) for help.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Our school makes visitors feel welcome.	1	2	3	4	5
48. My child feels that her/his learning is important to the teacher(s). *T2: This item was deleted. It was replaced with: My child feels uncomfortable making suggestions for classroom improvement to the teacher(s).*	1	2	3	4	5
49. I usually feel able to help my child with homework.	1	2	3	4	5

50.	I rarely attend parent information meetings at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
	T2: This item was deleted. Parents are given lots of good information from the school about what the children will be learning.					
51.	I wish I could do more to assist my child with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
	T2 I could do more to assist my child with school work if I had more information about the curriculum.					
52.	I make a strong contribution to how well my child does in school.	1	2	3	4	5
53.	My child's teacher(s) gives me information which allows me to help my child with homework.	1	2	3	4	5
54.	My child's family has strengths that could be tapped by the school to help my child succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
55.	My child lets me know when he/she needs help with a homework assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
56.	My child's teacher(s) often asks me to help.	1	2	3	4	5
57.	My child feels comfortable in class.	1	2	3	4	5
58.	My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about what my child is learning in class.	1	2	3	4	5
	T2: My child's teacher(s) usually gives me monthly previews of what my child will be learning.					
59.	I talk to my child about schoolwork quite a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
60.	My child and I find it difficult to work together on school work.	1	2	3	4	5
61.	My child's teacher(s) work hard to interest and excite parents.	1	2	3	4	5

62. If you were giving this school an overall rating as a place for your child to learn, on a scale of 1 to 9 (1 = very poor, 9 = excellent), what rating would you assign?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (circle one)

About you, the respondent:

- I am MALE / FEMALE; PARENT / GUARDIAN (circle the appropriate descriptions)
- I am or have been a teacher TRUE / FALSE (circle one).

Please provide some information about your home circumstances by filling in the blanks:

- How many parents/guardians in the home? ______
- How many adults in the home? ______
- How many children? Give ages: ______ ______ ______ ______
- How many parents/guardians work outside the home? Full-time ______ Part-time ______
- How many years of formal schooling have you had? (circle the best answer)
  1. More than one degree.
  2. University degree.
  3. Some post-secondary.
  4. Finished secondary.
  5. Did not finish secondary.

We have asked a lot of questions about how you feel about school and schoolwork. Did we forget something important? Tell us about it here:

Thank you very much for the help you have provided with this survey.

Appendix 4.4
Co-Production of Learning Project Teacher Survey

This appendix includes the Teacher Survey administered at Time 1. There were no changes made to the Teacher Survey at Time 2.

The original surveys had an area between each question where participants could make additional comments—that space has been removed for the purpose of this appendix.

site	cl	pers		no

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Teacher Survey

- Please try to answer **every question** by circling the most appropriate response.
- If you do not have the information you need to answer the question, leave it blank.
- Use the spaces between the questions to tell us more.

		Agree Strongly 1	**Agree 2**	**Not Sure 3**	**Disagree 4**	**Disagree Strongly 5**
1.	I talk to the parent(s) of my students about school events and activities.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I inform the parent(s) of my students about things that happen in class.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	It is unusual for other teachers to observe in my classroom while I am teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I inform the parent(s) of my students about the work that students do in class.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I work with other teachers in my school to solve instructional problems that children have.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I inform the parent(s) of my students about homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I spend time talking to students individually about their schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Many parents want more information about what the students are learning in the classroom than they normally get.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I ask most or all students to help other students with work in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I call/visit the parent(s) of my students to talk about the students' progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I visit other classrooms to learn how other teachers handle instructional problems.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I talk with colleagues in my school about professional topics.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Parents follow through on the suggestions that I make regarding their child's school work.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The parents of the children in my class support the instructional goals of our school.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I make sure my students understand their homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Parent involvement in instruction can help teachers be more effective with more students.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have lots of opportunities to learn more about teaching in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Parent involvement in instruction is important for student success in learning.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have a positive influence on the learning of every child that I teach regardless of family background.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Parents generally do not know how to help their children with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Many parents seem to be uncomfortable spending time at the school; they seem to feel out of place.	1	2	3	4	5

22. Teachers do not have time to involve parents in instruction in useful ways.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Parents can always help their children to succeed in school.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The children in my class are not mature enough to accept responsibility for their own learning.	1	2	3	4	5
25. This school is a very stimulating place to work; there is a lot of sharing of teaching ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I get lots of feedback from colleagues about my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The children in my class are at an age when they find school boring.	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I have difficulties in teaching, I feel confident that there is a body of professional knowledge for me to draw on to solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I get lots of support for things I try to do to improve my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The staff in this school usually solves school problems as a group.	1	2	3	4	5
31. In this school the staff agrees about what we are trying to accomplish for students.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Parents could easily learn more ways to help their children with school work.	1	2	3	4	5
33. In this school we almost always get the materials we need for instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I believe that the parents of the children I teach respect me as a professional.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase students' success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Parents almost always follow through on the suggestions that I make regarding their child's school work.	1	2	3	4	5

37. In this school we are blocked in what we are trying to accomplish for students by outsiders.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Children at this grade level are not yet capable of making good choices about what and how to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Parents generally set their expectations for their children's success in school too high.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I feel confident that I can establish a good working relationship with almost any parent.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Children at this grade level must develop a sense of personal responsibility for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Parent involvement in instruction is important to the establishment of good school climate.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Doing well in school is very important to the future happiness of every child I teach.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I feel confident that I can establish a good working relationship with almost any student.	1	2	3	4	5
45. At this grade level it is almost impossible to make school interesting for students.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I ask most or all students to take turns helping with things in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

What other things should we have asked you?

Appendix 4.5
Co-Production of Learning Project Student Interview

The only difference between the T1 and T2 Interview Schedules is that during the second interview students were asked if there were "any changes during the school year?"

site	cl	pers		no

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Student Interview

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 students—that is, the ways in which teachers and parents can work together to help students learn. We are collecting information from teachers, parents, and students about what happens and how people feel about it. Could you please answer the following questions as completely as possible. If you do not understand a question, please ask me to repeat it.

Question 1: Do you talk to your parent(s) about things that happen at school?

Probes: If YES: What kinds of things? Problems? What you are learning? Homework?

If NO: Why is that?

Notes: ____________________

Question 2: How do your parents feel about your school and your classroom?

Probes: Do they ask you about it? How do you feel about talking about school to your parents?

Notes: ____________________

Question 3: What is this school like as a place to learn? How about your classroom?

Probes: Stimulating? Boring? How do your friends feel about that?

Notes: ____________________

Question 4: Do you stay away from school very often?

Notes: ____________________

Question 5: Do the parents of students visit your classroom much? Do you think parent(s) are welcome in your classroom? What about your parents?

Probes: Do the students accept their presence without fussing?

Notes: ____________________

Question 6: Please describe the ways in which your parent(s) help you learn.

Probes: Do your parent(s) help in the school/classroom sometimes, when convenient? Do they accompany you on field-trips? Does your teacher call home sometimes for assistance?

Notes: ____________________

Question 7: Does your school encourage your parent(s) to get involved?

Probes: Do your parent(s) get written information from the school? Are they often invited to attend meetings? Are they asked to help in the school or to help you with your homework?

Notes: ____________________

Question 8: Could your parent(s) help you learn at school or at home more than they do? In what ways?

Notes: ______

Question 9: Do you ask your parent(s) for help with schoolwork from time to time? In what ways?

Probes: If no, why not? If yes, do you and your parent(s) work well together?

Notes: ______

Question 10: Is it important to you that you get a good education?

Probes: Whose job is it to make sure that you learn? Who decides things—about what you study, for example?

Notes: ______

Question 11: Have you thought about what you are going to do after you leave school?

Probes: Have your parent(s) talked about this? Do your friends talk about it?

Notes: ______

Question 12: Do you feel you count for something in your classroom/school?

Probes: What makes you feel this way?

Notes: ______

Question 13: Do you ever feel that things could be done differently or better in your classroom. Have you ever spoken to your teacher about this?

Probes: In what ways? Why / why not?

Notes: ______

Question 14: Is there anything I haven't asked you on this topic that you would like to mention?

Notes: ______

Appendix 4.6
Co-Production of Learning Project Parent Interview

The only difference between the T1 and T2 Interview Schedules is that during the second interview parents were asked if there were "any changes during the school year?"

site	cl	pers		no

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Parent Interview

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 students—that is, the ways in which teachers and parents can work together to help students learn. We are collecting information from teachers, parents, and students about what happens and how people feel about it. Could you please answer the following questions as completely as possible. If you do not understand a question, please ask me to repeat it.

Question 1: How many children do you have in school? What grade level(s)?

Notes: ____

Question 2: As a parent do you feel welcome in your child's school?

Probes: What causes you to feel this way?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 3: As a parent do you feel welcome in your child's classroom?

Probes: Do the children accept your presence without fussing? Does the teacher greet you by name, when convenient?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 4: Please describe the ways in which you are involved with the school your child attends?

Probes: Do you work as a volunteer sometimes, when convenient? Do you attend meetings? Do you accompany children on field-trips? Do you call or visit the school sometimes?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 5: Does the school encourage your involvement?

Probes: Do you get written information from the school (school level or classroom level)? Are you often invited to attend meetings? Does the teacher call you about helping?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 6: Could you help in the school more than you do? In what ways?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 7: What prevents you from doing more to help your child learn?

Probes: Do teachers welcome your assistance in classrooms or school? Does your child ask for your help at home? Do you feel comfortable about helping your child with school work? What kind of help do you provide? Do you enjoy this experience? Does your child enjoy this?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 8: Do you feel that your child's teacher sees you as a partner/team member in your child's education?

Probes: Could you give some examples of what s/he does that makes you feel (not feel) that way? What could you do to help that you do not now do? Could you describe ways in which you and the teacher work together?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 9: Has there ever been a time when you felt excluded from your child's schooling?

Probes: What were the circumstances? Who made you feel that way?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 10: Have there been times when you felt that you had to stand up for your child's interests at school?

Probes: Have there been times when you felt you needed to but did not? What stopped you?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 11: Were there times when you felt that the teacher missed an opportunity to gain your support?

Probes: Can you recall specific incidents?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 12: When you and your child's teacher meet, what kinds of things are typically discussed?

Probes: Do you feel comfortable in these meetings?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 13: Do you have a sense that your child's teacher respects your child?

Probes: What does s/he do that makes you feel this way?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 14: Have your child's teachers (present/past) helped you to learn things that enabled you to assist your child with his/her school work?

Probes: Could you give some examples?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 15: How does your child feel about school?

Probes: What makes you think that?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 16: How far do you expect your child to go in school?

Probes: Why do you think that? Does your child talk about going on in school?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 17: In what ways do you feel your child takes responsibility for his/her own education?

Probes: Could you give some examples? What would you like to see him/her do differently, if anything?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 18: What words immediately come to mind when I mention the following: "the relationship between parents and teachers"?

Probes: How do you think your child's teacher would respond to this question?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 19: Is there anything I haven't asked you on this topic that you would like to mention?

Notes: ______________________________

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE YOU HAVE PROVIDED.

Appendix 4.7
Co-Production of Learning Project Teacher Interview

With the exception of a re-wording of question 7 (in italics), the only difference between the T1 and T2 Interview Schedules is that during the second interview teachers were asked if there were "any changes during the school year?"

site	cl	pers		no

Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Co-Production of Learning: Teacher Interview

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 students—that is, the ways in which teachers and parents can work together to help students learn. We are collecting information from teachers, parents, and students about what happens and how people feel about it. Could you please answer the following questions as completely as possible. If you do not understand a question, please ask me to repeat it.

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

Probes: Can you give some examples of how this is done?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 2: As a teacher do you feel that parents should always feel welcome in your school?

Probes: Are there good ways of making them feel welcome?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 3: Do you welcome parents in your classrooms?

Probes: Do they interrupt things? Do the children accept their presence without fussing?

Notes: ______________________________

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?

Notes: ______________________________

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

Probes: In what ways?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 6: Are there things that 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?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 7: Do teachers here see parents as partners/team members in children's education?
T2: Item was reworded to read: How would you describe the appropriate relationship between parents/teachers?

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

Notes: ______________________________

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

Probes: Could you give some examples?

Notes: ______________________________

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

Probes: How? Could you give some examples?

Notes: ______________________________

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

Probes: Could you give some examples?

Notes: ______________________________

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?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 12: What kinds of work do you frequently do with other teachers?

Probes: Student problems? Classroom observing? Sharing instructional ideas?

Notes: ______________________________

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?

Notes: ______________________________

Question 14: What is this school like as a place to teach?

Probes: Stimulating? Collegial? Supportive?

Notes: ______________________________

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

Notes: ______________________________

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?

Notes: ____

Question 17: Is there anything I haven't asked you on this topic that you would like to mention?

Notes: ____

Appendix 4.8
Co-Production of Learning Project Letters of Consent

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

Faculty of Education

Peter Coleman
(604) 291-3622

OCT 31, 1990

LETTER OF CONSENT (PARENTS — GRADE 6/7)

Dear Parents:

Your school and your school district have given permission for a group of teachers in the district and 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, by such things as helping the child to develop good study skills, children sometimes learn more and develop more positive attitudes to school. 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 years, covering the transition from grade 6 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 researchers will provide some training for parents and teachers and will monitor the results to give advice and assistance.

There are two possible levels of participation for parents and children:

- Full participation would involve attending some training sessions held at the school and agreeing to implement some of the recommended practices in working with your child in the home. In addition, full participation would involve agreeing to a series of brief telephone interviews during the two year period.

- Limited participation would involve you and your child responding to a pencil and paper opinion survey and one or two brief interviews.

You may, of course, choose not to participate at all. Should you choose at this time either full or limited participation, you and your child may still withdraw from the project at any time.

All information provided by you and your child during the course of the project will be held in confidence by the research group. Your responses to surveys and interviews 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 provide. 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.

If you choose full participation, ongoing progress reports will automatically be provided to you. Should you choose limited or no participation, you may still learn about the results of the project by calling or writing to the Director of the project.

Would you please complete the attached form and return it in the envelope with the survey.

Yours truly

Peter Coleman, Professor

CO-PRODUCTION OF LEARNING PROJECT

OCTOBER, 1990

GENERAL LETTER OF CONSENT (PARENTS — GRADE 6/7)

I agree to full participation for my child and myself ____________________

I agree to limited participation for my child and myself ________________

I choose not to participate in this project ____________________________

I need additional information before making a decision ________________

School Name: ____

Print Name (Child): ____

Print Name (Parent): ____

Signature: ____

Telephone No.: ____

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SENT IN THIS FORM IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO COMPLETE A SECOND ONE.

Consent Form — Parent 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 (Child): ____

Print Name (Parent): ____

Signature: ____

Telephone No.: ____

Consent Form — Parent Survey

I understand that the information I provide by completing this survey 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 (Child): ______________________________

Print Name (Parent): ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Telephone No.: ______________________________

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 (PRINCIPAL)

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, by such things as reading aloud to the child, or having the child explain mathematics problems, 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: <u>Full participation</u> involves attending some training sessions held at the school, agreeing to implement some of the recommended practices in working with the child in the home, and agreeing to respond 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, there are two levels of participation. Full participation means the involvement of the teacher's class; the teacher will participate 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 attend if they wish. Teachers will also be asked to complete some pencil-and-paper surveys, and participate in several brief interviews, often by telephone.

Limited participation, for teachers whose students and parents are not involved, will require only that the teachers complete a pencil-and-paper survey twice during the school year, and assist in the collection of surveys to be completed by parents.

For the school principal, involvement requires consenting to be interviewed a number of times during the school year, and facilitating the collection of information, including a survey from parents, some not participating in the project, regarding school climate.

All information provided during the course of the project will be held in confidence by the research group. Responses will be coded so that names do not appear in the data files. At no time will anyone at your school have access to the information provided by individuals. All reports will use coded data only. Anonymity for participants 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 local contact person.

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: ____________________

Information Form — Student Survey

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.

School Name: ______________________________

Teacher's Name: ______________________________

Print Name (Student): ______________________________

Print Name (Parent): ______________________________

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.: ________________________________

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.: ______________________________

Consent Form — Teacher Survey

I understand that the information I provide by completing this survey 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 survey by me as an individual.

School Name: ______________________________

Print Name: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Telephone No.: ______________________________

Appendix 4.9
Teacher Workshop Agenda

Thursday, February 7th, 1991

Time / Leader	Activity
9:00–9:20 Joan	Introduction • Personal Introductions • Agenda • Introduction to the Topic • Research Overview
9:20–9:30 Joan/Yvonne	Parent Agenda and Suggestions
9:30–9:40 Yvonne	Handouts—Distribution and Perusal (Jane/Julie/Joan distribute)
9:40–10:25 Yvonne	Strategies
10:30–10:45	Break
10:45–11:05 Joan	Small Group Discussion (Recorder/Reporter necessary) (20 min.) • What do you feel are the benefits of parent involvement? • Strategies used to promote parent involvement that have worked well • Other strategies considered
11:05–11:35 Yvonne	Large Group—Summary of small group discussions
11:45–12:30 Joan	Lunch
12:30–12:40 Yvonne	Identification of Personal Task (to be implemented within next two weeks)
12:40–1:10 Yvonne	Discussion of Personal Tasks—with suggestions from group regarding implementation
1:15–1:30 (Joan)	Closure • Next meeting • Where research is going from here • Contact numbers (for all) • Thank yous • Evaluations

Appendix 4.10
Workshop Evaluation

1. What aspects of this workshop did you find most useful?

   ____

   ____

2. In what ways could the workshop have been made more informative?

   ____

   ____

3. Was there enough time provided for you to ask questions? Yes ________ No ________

   Comments: ____

   ____

4. Are there questions you would liked to have asked, but did not? Yes ________ No ______

   Comments: ____

   ____

5. If this workshop were offered again, what topics would you like to have covered?

   ____

   ____

6. What did you learn at the workshop that you feel you could use immediately?

   ____

   ____

7. Overall, I found this workshop very informative.

   Strongly Agree   Strongly Disagree

   1   2   3   4   5

Appendix 4.11
Parent Workshop Agenda

Wednesday, February 7th, 1991

Time / Leader	Activity
7:00–7:15 Joan	Introduction • Reminder to sign-in • Parent Surveys (to those who may not have completed one) • Personal Introductions (Jane, Julie, Yvonne, Joan) • Review Agenda • Introduction to the topic/overview of research
7:15–7:35 Joan	Small Group Discussion (20 minutes) (research group circulates) • Rationale—Prince George group requested more opportunity to discuss issues amongst themselves • The question we would like to put to you and ask that you discuss amongst yourselves is this . . . What concerns and/or questions brought you here tonight and caused you to want to participate in this project? • 20 minutes/recorder and reporter needed to provide summary of discussion to the larger group.
7:35–7:45 Yvonne	Large Group Discussion (10 minutes) (Jane and Julie to record responses)
7:45–7:55 Yvonne	Distribute information packages (Jane, Julie, Joan to distribute) Quick browse
7:55–8:40	Practical suggestions
8:40–8:50 Yvonne	Break
8:50–9:00 Joan	Task identification (parents will be asked to identify one strategy that they will be able to implement within the week) (Research group to circulate)
9:00–9:10 Joan/Yvonne	Large Group—Questions
9:10–9:15 Joan	Closure • desire to reconvene at a later date? • where study is going • some telephone contact (random sample) • contact us (Peter 291–3622/Joan 291–4756/3524) • thank yous
9:15–9:30 Yvonne	Evaluation

Appendix 4.12
Master Code List: Student Study

REPORT HEADER

This Report is on the following codes:

absenteeism
attitude to school
barriers
change absenteeism no
change absenteeism yes
change att to sch no
change attitude to school
change cl lrng env no
change class lrng env better
change class lrng env neg
change class lrng env not sure
change class lrng env yes
change class visit no
change clsrm changes no
change clsrm changes yes
change count for smthng no
change count for smthng yes
change future plans no
change future plans yes
change impt of educ no
change par cl visit no
change par cl visit yes
change par cld do more no
change par likes class unsure
change par likes class yes
change par likes sch no
change par likes sch unsure
change par wel in class no
change pi cl or sch decrease
change pi hlrng no
change pi hlrng yes
change pt comm more
change pt comm yes
change sch enc pi no
change sch home comm better
change sp comm comfort no
change sp comm hmwk more
change sp comm hmwrk no
change sp comm no
change sp comm sch gen no
change sp comm sch gen yes
change st coll more
change st coll no
change stud efficacy
change working sp rel no
change working sp rel yes
class learn env gen comments
class learn env in between
class learn env neg
class learn env no opinion
class learn env pos
class learn env recommen
classrm changes unsure
count for smthng indef

count for smthng neg
count for smthng pos
count for smtng freq
count for somethng in btwn
count for sthg ques not clear
future plans indefinite
future plans no
future plans yes
gender
home sch as diff places
homework
homework p resp
impt of educ
level of sch
lrng env chars
lrng env sch nt so good
lrng env school in btwn
lrng env school neg
lrng env school pos
lrng env school recomm
lrng env school unsure
not coded
open ended no
open ended yes
p perc st rel pos
p tch comm
par cld do more no
par cld hlp more uncertain
par cld hlp more yes
par likes class indefinite
par likes class no
par likes class yes
par likes school indef
par likes school no
par likes school yes
par likes tch no
par likes teacher dnt know
par likes teacher yes
par welcome in class no
par welcome in class unsure
par welcome in class yes
par welcome in sch indef
par welcome in school yes
parent availability at home
parent values school
peers
pi call visit yes
pi cl s reac
pi cl visit dnt know
pi cl visit gen comm
pi cl visit no
pi cl visit s reac
pi cl visit s recomm
pi cl visit yes
pi class level misc yes
pi class level no
pi diff in grade levels
pi field trips gen comm
pi field trips no
pi field trips pos
pi hlrng homework hlps no
pi hlrng homework hlps yes
pi hlrng homework monitors
pi hlrng homework sets time
pi hlrng miscellaneous
pi hlrng outcomes
pi hlrng rdg encourages
pi hlrng s reac

pi hlrng studying
pi outcomes
pi parent attends mtgs no
pi parent attends mtgs stime
pi parent attends mtgs yes
pi pt conf yes
pi school level no
pi school level yes
pp communication
previous
pt have met
resp for lrng dont know
resp for lrng parents
resp for lrng stud
resp for lrng tch
s feel abt sch pos
s perc of tch att to pi hmwk
s perc parent eff pos
s perc pt coll outcomes
s perc pt collaboration
s perc pts collaboration
s perc tt collaboration
s perc wrkg rel pt
s perc wrkg rel pt probs
s reaction pres at pt mtgs
s resp neg
s resp pos
s tch coll gen comments
s tch coll neg
s tch coll pos
s tch coll recomm
s tch comm mixed
s tch comm neg
s tch comm pos
s tch rel general comments
s tch rel neg
s tch rel recomm
s values educ pos
sch enc pi mixed
sch enc pi no
sch enc pi recommendations
sch enc pi unsure
sch enc pi yes
sch home comm no
sch home comm yes
sp comm gen comments
sp comm ltd
sp comm mixed
sp comm no
sp comm p init no
sp comm p init stimes
sp comm p init topic
sp comm p init yes
sp comm pinit freq
sp comm school comf dnt know
sp comm school comf mixed
sp comm school comf neg
sp comm school comfort pos
sp comm school gen cond
sp comm school gen uncert
sp comm yes
stud efficacy
stud link btwn home school
stud part beyond class
stud stud lrng rels
t char neg prev
t char pos prev
t chars

t strat pi dnt know
t strat pi folders s reac
t strat pi hmwk bk s reac
t strat pi no
t strat pi yes
tch enc pi uncertain
transition
working rel neg
working rel pos
working rel ups downs

(End list of codes)

END OF HEADER

Appendix 4.13
Master Code List: Parent Study

REPORT HEADER

CODES: Parent Substudy

This Report is on the following codes:

y barr pi
y ch gen comments
y ch no
y ch no 9
y ch yes
y ch yes neg
y curr of the home
y dropouts
y flt excl gen comments
y flt excl no
y flt excl yes
y future plans indef
y future plans yes
y gen comments
y gender
y homework
y level of sch gen comments
y missed opp spt gen comm
y missed opp spt no
y missed opp spt yes
y neg pt exp 9 or prev
y no of children
y not coded
y open ended
y p att attendance
y p att children
y p att pi gen comments
y p att pi neg
y p att pi pos
y p att t gen comments
y p att t general neg
y p cld hlp more sch gen com
y p comf hlp s mixed
y p comf hlp s no
y p comf hlp s yes
y p comf pt int gen comm
y p comf pt int mixed
y p comf pt int pos
y p comf tp int neg
y p concern
y p concern action
y p concern action outc
y p concern gen comm
y p concern outc gen comm
y p concern prev
y p eff gen comments
y p eff mixed
y p eff neg
y p eff pos
y p expectations dnt exist
y p feels welc cl gen comm
y p feels welc cl no
y p feels welc cl no 9
y p feels welc cl yes

y p feels welc cl yes 9
y p feels welc sch no
y p feels welc sch nt entrly
y p feels welc sch yes
y p perc pt rel dnt know
y p perc pt rel dnt know 9
y p perc pt rel gen comm
y p perc pt rel mixed
y p perc pt rel neg
y p perc pt rel neg 9
y p perc pt rel neutral
y p perc pt rel pos
y p perc pt rel pos 9
y p perc pt rel prev
y p perc s perc ps wrk rel g cm
y p perc s perc ps wrk rel mix
y p perc s perc ps wrk rel neg
y p perc s perc ps wrk rel pos
y p perc s perc pt wrk rel unc
y p perc s perc st rel mixed
y p perc s perc st rel neg
y p perc s perc st rel wrong
y p perc sch att s neg
y p perc sch att s pos
y p perc st interact neg 9
y p perc st rel gen comm
y p perc st rel neg
y p perc st rel neg 9
y p perc st rel pos
y p perc st rel pos 9
y p perc st rel prev
y p perc t att p hlp s neg 9
y p perc t att pi gen comm
y p perc t att pi pos
y p perc t att pi pos 9
y p perc t comf pt interact
y p perc t eff neg
y p perc t eff pos
y p perc t perc pt rel gen com
y p perc t perc pt rel neg
y p perc t perc pt rel pos
y p perc t perc tp rel no idea
y p perc t perc tp rel pos 9
y p perc t perc tp rel pos dub
y p perc t pos
y p values educ pos
y peers
y pi attend mtg gen comm
y pi attend mtg no
y pi attend mtg stimes
y pi attend mtg yes
y pi attend sch func no
y pi attend sch func yes
y pi attnd pt conf no
y pi attnd pt conf yes
y pi call vst gen comm
y pi call vst no
y pi call vst nt much
y pi call vst yes
y pi cl gen comm
y pi cl ltd
y pi cl no
y pi cl visit s reac gen comm
y pi cl visit s reac prev
y pi cl visit yes previous
y pi cl yes
y pi cl yes benefits
y pi cl yes prev
y pi diff by grade level
y pi fld trips gen comm
y pi fld trips ltd
y pi fld trips no

y pi fld trips yes
y pi fundraising
y pi hlrng
y pi hlrng gen comm
y pi hlrng prev
y pi miscellaneous
y pi other
y pi outcomes
y pi previous
y pi sch gen comments
y pi sch limited
y pi sch no
y pi sch yes
y power
y pp comm
y previous
y principal
y principal prev
y proj outcome
y ps wkg rel neg
y ps wrkg rel gen comments
y ps wrkg rel mixed
y ps wrkg rel pos
y ps wrkg rel prev
y pt comm p init gen comm
y pt comm p init ltd
y pt comm p init yes
y pt contact
y pt ideal relationship
y pt int outcomes
y ques not understood
y quotable quotes
y research comments
y s asks for hlp gen comm
y s asks for hlp no
y s asks for hlp smtimes
y s asks for hlp yes
y s characteristics
y s dem resp for educ gen com
y s dem resp for educ ltd
y s dem resp for educ no
y s dem resp for educ no prev
y s dem resp for educ yes
y s dem rsp for educ mixed
y s dem rsp for educ p pref
y s feel abt sch gen comm
y s feel abt sch mixed
y s feel abt sch neg
y s feel abt sch pos
y s feel abt sch prev
y s link btn h sch
y s link btn h sch prev
y s part bynd cl yes
y s perc impt of educ
y sch characteristics
y sch cli neg
y sch climate gen comm
y sch climate pos
y sch enc pi gen comm
y sch enc pi no
y sch enc pi not def
y sch enc pi not really
y sch enc pi yes
y sch enc pi yes p reac
y sch h comm gen comm
y secty pst pres
y sp comm gen comm
y sp comm ltd
y sp comm no
y sp comm sch ltd
y sp comm yes
y stnd up gen comments

y t char gen comments
y t characteristics neg
y t characteristics pos
y t characteristics prev
y t chars 9
y t greets p by name
y t hlp p hlp s gen comm
y t hlp p hlp s no
y t hlp p hlp s no 9 or prev
y t hlp p hlp s ques mark
y t hlp p hlp s yes
y t hlp p hlp s yes 9 or prev
y t rspt s gen comments
y t rspt s no
y t rspt s no other
y t rspt s yes
y t rspt s yes 9 or prev
y t strat pi cl newsl no
y t strat pi cl no
y t strat pi cl parent
y t strat pi cl yes
y t strat pi comm no
y t strat pi comm yes
y t strat pi curr
y t strat pi curr overview
y t strat pi curr overview no
y t strat pi enc p call vst
y t strat pi enc p hlp hwk yes
y t strat pi fld trips yes
y t strat pi good news no
y t strat pi hmwk bk gen comm
y t strat pi hmwk bk no
y t strat pi hmwk bk yes
y t strat pi inst
y t strat pi inst reac
y t strat pi misc
y t strat pi misc no
y t strat pi no prev
y t strat pi other
y t strat pi p signs tests
y t strat pi pt conf
y t strat pi pt conf gen comm
y t strat pi reg prog rpt
y t strat pi shares expect
y t strat pi tel gen comm
y t strat pi tel no
y t strat pi tel yes
y t strat pi vol list
y t strat pi wrk hme for sig
y t strat pi yes 9 or other
y t strat pi yes prev
y the good teacher
y tp comm ltd
y tp comm topic
y tp comm topic 9
y tp comm topic gen comm
y transition
y ways p cld hlp
y ways t cld hlp
y year 2000
y yowzer

(End list of codes)

END OF HEADER

Appendix 4.14
Master Code List: Teacher Study

REPORT HEADER

This Report is on the following codes:

x barriers
x bridges tp wrkg rel
x ch gen comments
x ch ltd
x ch mixed
x ch no
x ch yes
x cl lrng env
x curr of the home gen
x curr of the home neg
x curr of the home outcomes
x curr of the home pos
x difficult pt experiences
x gen comments
x gender
x homework
x ideal pt rel
x not coded
x open ended
x p as partner no
x p as partners
x p characteristics
x p cld hlp more
x p follow through mixed
x p follow through neg
x p holds t accountable
x p link btwn s t
x p perc t att s
x p supports t mixed
x p supports t yes
x p welc gen comm
x p welc in cl yes
x p welc in sch no
x p welc in sch yes
x peers
x pi cl gen comments
x pi cl neg
x pi cl outcomes
x pi cl pinit neg
x pi cl pint yes
x pi cl s reac
x pi diff by grade
x pi fld trips gen comm
x pi fld trp yes
x pi grade 6 and 7
x pi outcomes
x pi sch
x pi sch downside
x pi sch gen comm
x power
x pp comm
x previous
x principal
x proj gen comments

x proj outcomes
x s char
x s link btwn home and sch
x s resp gen comm
x s resp mixed
x s resp neg
x s resp pos
x sch att pi pos
x sch char gen
x sch climate gen
x sch climate mixed
x sch climate pos
x sch enc pi gen comments
x sch enc pi limited
x sch enc pi mixed
x sch enc pi no
x sch enc pi outcome
x sch enc pi yes
x sch strat pi reactive
x stud stud lrng rel
x stud stud lrng rel neg
x support and resources
x t att group lrng
x t att pi cl gen comments
x t att pi cl neg
x t att pi cl pos
x t att pi dubious
x t att pi gen comments
x t att pi neg
x t att pi pos
x t att s
x t concerns general
x t eff gen comments
x t eff in btwn
x t eff neg
x t eff pos
x t hlp p hlp s inst gen comm
x t hlp p hlp s inst ltd
x t hlp p hlp s inst yes
x t hlp p hlp s neg
x t perc p att toward t
x t perc p comf dnt know
x t perc p comf mixed
x t perc p comf neg
x t perc p comf pos
x t perc p eff gen comment
x t perc p eff mixed
x t perc p eff neg
x t perc p eff pos
x t perc p feels wel mixed
x t perc p feels wel no
x t perc p feels wel yes
x t perc p int pi
x t perc p perc pt rel dnt kn
x t perc p perc pt rel gen com
x t perc p perc pt rel mixed
x t perc p perc pt rel neg
x t perc p perc pt rel pos
x t perc p perc sch cli pos
x t perc p perc t cares abt s
x t perc p perc t chars
x t perc p perc t p roles
x t perc p supp sch goals gen c
x t perc pt rel dnt know
x t perc pt rel dubious
x t perc pt rel gen comments
x t perc pt rel mixed
x t perc pt rel neg

x t perc pt rel pos
x t perc role of p and t
x t perc sp interaction
x t perc t att pi
x t perc t chars
x t perc t strat pi gen
x t rpt pi hlrng
x t spkg as p
x t strat pi cl gen comments
x t strat pi cl neg
x t strat pi cl neutral
x t strat pi cl outcome
x t strat pi cl pos
x t strat pi cl reac
x t strat pi comm
x t strat pi curr overview
x t strat pi enc p hlp w hmwk
x t strat pi enc p to come in
x t strat pi field trips yes
x t strat pi fld trip gen comm
x t strat pi folders
x t strat pi future
x t strat pi gen comm
x t strat pi hmwk bk
x t strat pi inst gen comm
x t strat pi inst neg
x t strat pi inst pos
x t strat pi misc
x t strat pi monthly rpt
x t strat pi open door
x t strat pi outcomes
x t strat pi promote st comm
x t strat pi reac
x t strat pi reg rpts
x t strat pi tel
x t strat pi tel gen comm
x t strat pi tel no
x tp comm disgruntled
x tp comm gen comments
x tp comm topic
x transition
x triad
x ts coll gen comments
x ts coll mixed
x ts coll neg
x ts coll outcomes
x ts coll pos
x tt coll
x ways p can help
x ways p can promote tp rel
x ways t can help
x year 2000
X YOWZERS

(End list of codes)

END OF HEADER

Appendix 4.15
Sample HyperRESEARCH Report

What appears below is a portion of a parent interview that lists all codes applied to that interview and the source data to which the code has been applied.

________________ REPORT HEADER ________________

________________ END OF HEADER ________________

The actual report follows:

Case, Code,

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: What prevents you from doing more to help your child learn?

Well, difficult, like her biggest problem, and we've talked about this before, is math. Well, I know how to do math. She knows how to do math, but the two of them don't coincide. You know, I mean, we both come out with the same answer, but it's wrong because they aren't doing it that way at school. So, how can you help her?

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: She knows how to do math, but the two of them don't coincide. You know, I mean, we both come out with the same answer, but it's wrong because they aren't doing it that way at school. So, how can you help her? And she gets frustrated because you can't help her. You're afraid to show her what, how you were taught because that's wrong maybe to what, nine times out of ten they're taught now.

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: Fractions I flunked with top honours when I went to school. I mean, I can fumble through them, right, but I never liked them and we had it a lot easier, I think, when we went to school than what they do nowadays, but they throw them that and the way they word them in the book. Like, I have to sit and really read the example they give to be able to determine in my brain what they want.

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: if she doesn't know what she's supposed to do, how can she go ahead and do them? She can't do it and it's no wonder that the kids are all having problems because they can't bring them home to us.

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: Could you help in the school more than you do? In what ways?

I probably could if I wanted to, but I don't want to

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: but it's confusing, I would say, for what they're asking in these books and if the kids don't understand it to begin with then it must be totally confusing for them, if it's confusing to me. And I find it really confusing. I don't know what they want.

Case 163, y barr pi,

Source Material: she gets really frustrated because she doesn't understand and I can't help her because I don't understand it and I don't want to tell her the way I think it is and have her go to school and from what I gather then she gets chewed out from her teacher because she doesn't understand

Case 163, y ch no,

Source Material: any changes during the year?

Not that I can see.

Case 163, y ch no,

Source Material: Any changes in your work relationship over the year?

No,

Case 163, y ch no,

Source Material: Any changes over the year as far as respect is concerned? Better?

I don't think so other than, like I said, x gets these periods more often where she doesn' want to go to school and nine times out of ten she doesn't go to school so there's got to be a reason.

Case 163, y ch no,

Source Material: P: Any changes over the year?

Basically the same as what it was. It's just, it's not there

Case 163, y ch yes,

Source Material: That's a change from September?

Yep, because I mean it was nothing for her to get up for school the next morning and "Have you got your homework done?" "No." So that way she's...

P: And that doesn't happen as often now?

No, she knows now that her homework has to be done. If she's got homework she does it when she gets home from school. It's not leaving it till eight or nine o'clock at night before we do our homework. You know, sometimes she doesn't get it done so she has to get up early in the morning and have it done before she goes to school.

Case 163, y ch yes,

Source Material: P: Any other changes throughout the school year that you've noticed?

Not that I've noticed. No, other than what I've already told you about her math and that, things have been going along extremely normal I would say. I wouldn't say well, but normal for schools. I don't notice anything. And because she's the type of kid she is I'm sure I would know if there was anything major.

Case 163, y ch yes neg,

Source Material: Any changes since we spoke in the fall about how you feel about the classroom?

Nope. It's like I told you, as far as I'm concerned it's got worse—the whole thing. Miss X is a pain in the butt.

Case 163, y ch yes neg,

Source Material: Attitude—like something is going to pot because now she's finding excuses why she doesn't want to go to school and that's not x. Something is happening. I don't know whether it's up here on the teachers and principal level or whether it's something that's going on with the kids, I don't know.

Case 163, y ch yes neg,

Source Material: She has never been a problem as far as going to school. Now I'm finding—not constantly—but every now and again we hit a day, well, I'm not going to school. Well, that's not x. So that tells me something is happening somewheres. She really enjoys school, but it's just been the last—I would say since Christmas that it's really—to me it's becoming a problem because that's not her. So that tells me that something is going somewheres and

Case 163, y ch yes neg,

Source Material: Anything else that has or has not made you feel like a partner or team member in your child's education?

I'm trying to think what the last one was that we went over with her, something to do with x staying in and x saying that she's not explaining. She doesn't understand. So her dad phoned and I can't remember just what it was. It was something. But they set up what we were getting fed back through x—and I'm not saying whether she was right or wrong because I try to wait until I have both sides of the story, but this teacher just doesn't seem like she's ready to tell you

Case 163, y t rspt s gen comments,

Source Material: They want these kids listen and learn a little bit of respect, well, they should show some of that back to the kids. I mean, that shouldn't give them the right to holler at them or centre them out. I mean, she's just around the corner from being a teenager. We all know that's the embarrassing time of our life and we dont' want to be centred out in front of all the kids in the class, right?

Case 163, y t rspt s no,

Source Material: teacher respects your child?

No, I think she picks on her and don't ask me for a reason because I can't give you a reason. That's just the feeling I get

Case 163, y t rspt s no,

Source Material: I think these teachers not pick, but they get this one kid—personality clash, somewhere's in there. I honestly feel this. I think it's with her and x that maybe there's some kind of a slight personality clash and because she is the peer, I mean she's going to come out ahead, right? The kid's going to be wrong. Doesn't matter what she does, she's going to be wrong.

Appendix 6.1
Scale Reliabilities

Parent Survey—Time 1

(Note: significant Time 2 changes are shown **in bold**)

Scale 1. Parent perception of student/teacher communication.
Cronbach's Alpha: .66. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.37 16. My child's teacher(s) makes sure my child understands homework assignments.
.55 23. My child feels comfortable approaching teacher(s) with schoolwork questions or concerns.
.54 46. My child feels comfortable asking the teacher(s) for help.
.48 48. My child feels that her/his learning is important to the teacher(s).

Scale 2. Parent perception of student/parent communication.
Cronbach's Alpha: .82. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.56 3. My child keeps me informed about classroom activities.
.47 8. My child talks to me about his/her plans for schooling in the future.
.63 12. My child lets me know when s/he is having problems in the class.
.65 13. My child usually discusses homework with me.
.69 17. My child keeps me informed about school activities.
.56 55. My child lets me know when he/she needs help with a homework assignment.

Scale 3. Parent perception of teacher/parent communication (instruction).
Cronbach's Alpha: .72. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.60 5. My child's teacher(s) provides information about instructional programs so that I understand my child's schoolwork.
.55 7. My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about homework assignments.
.55 15. My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about what my child is learning in the classroom.
.36 53. My child's teacher(s) gives me information which allows me to help my child with homework.

Scale 4. Parent perception of teacher/parent communication (general).
Cronbach's Alpha: .65. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.54 6. My child's teacher(s) keeps me informed about classroom activities.
.43 19. My child's teacher(s) informs me when my child is doing well in class.
.28 33. I feel satisfied with my interviews with my child's teacher(s).
.36 56. My child's teacher(s) often asks me to help.
.45 61. My child's teacher(s) work hard to interest and excite parents.

Scale 5. Parent perception of teacher concern about parent involvement.
Cronbach's Alpha: .81. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.54 27. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's work in class, if necessary.

.48 29. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's homework, if necessary.
.59 31. I am sure that my child's teacher(s) will contact me about my child's behaviour, if necessary.
.56 37. My child's teacher(s) makes me feel part of a team.
.72 39. My child's teacher(s) seems interested in hearing my opinions about my child.
.50 40. Parents find teachers easily approachable at this school.
.61 44. My child's teacher(s) makes time to talk to me when it is necessary.

Scale 6. Parent perception of parent/school communication.
Cronbach's Alpha: .78. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.38 2. I call/visit my child's teacher(s) to talk about my child's progress.
.43 9. I talk to my child's teacher(s) about the instructional program in the classroom.
.45 18. I make sure to tell my child's teacher(s) when I think things are going well.
.64 21. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's work in class.
.67 22. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's homework.
.71 25. I feel free to contact my child's teacher(s) about my child's behaviour in class.

Scale 7. Parent values schooling.
Cronbach's Alpha: .54. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.41 1. I talk to my child about school events/activities.
.35 4. I encourage my child always to do his/her best work in school.
.38 59. I talk to my child about schoolwork quite a lot.

Scale 8. Parent perception of school climate.
Cronbach's Alpha: .81. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.38 10. The instructional program in our school helps to motivate students.
.55 24. Students are excited about learning in this school.
.46 26. Students in our school have the necessary ability to achieve well in basic skills.
.50 28. The academic emphasis in our school is challenging to students.
.63 30. Students are proud of our school.
.53 32. Our school reflects the values of the community in which it is located.
.53 36. Teachers make schoolwork interesting for students in this school.
.46 45. Our school is an important part of the community.
.51 47. Our school makes visitors feel welcome.
.34 57. My child feels comfortable in class.

Scale 9. Parent perception of parent efficacy.
Cronbach's Alpha: .45 **(T2: .61)**. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.40 38. My own education prepared me well to help my child with school work.
.28 49. I usually feel able to help my child with homework.
.15 50. Parents are given lots of good information from the school about what the children will be learning.
.13 51. I wish I could do more to assist my child with school work.
.23 52. I make a strong contribution to how well my child does in school.
.38 54. My child's family has strengths that could be tapped by the school to help my child succeed.
.19 60. My child and I find it difficult to work together on schoolwork. (Reversed)

Note: T1 N = 187; T2 N = 162.

Student Survey—Time 1

Scale A. Student perception of communications with parents.

Cronbach's Alpha: .77. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.58 1. I let my parent(s) know about school events and activities.
.59 3. I let my parent(s) know about things that happen in class.
.52 11. I let my parent(s) know what homework I have.
.47 12. I talk to my parent(s) about my plans for the future.
.38 13. I feel comfortable asking my parents for help with my homework.
.66 17. I feel comfortable talking to my parents about school work.

Scale B. Student values school.

Cronbach's Alpha: .70. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.50 26. It is important to my friends at school that they have their assignments done on time.
.45 27. I don't stay home from school unless I'm really sick.
.36 28. It's important to me that my teacher knows that I am doing my best in school.
.55 29. My friends don't stay home from school unless they are really sick.
.32 32. It's important to me that my parent(s) know that I am doing my best in school.
.34 33. It bothers me if I am late handing in assignments.
.34 41. I stay away from school whenever I can. (Reversed)

Scale C. Student perception of school/home communication.

Cronbach's Alpha: .73. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.34 2. My parent(s) feel comfortable talking to my teacher about my progress in school.
.62 4. My teacher lets my parent(s) know about our work in class.
.57 5. My teacher lets my parent(s) know about what I am learning in the classroom.
.56 6. My teacher lets my parent(s) know about my homework assignments.

Scale D. Student perception of personal efficacy.

Cronbach's Alpha: .75 **(T2: .82)**. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.40 39. I enjoy helping other students in the class with their schoolwork.
.41 42. If I do well on a test, it's usually because I "lucked out" on it. (Reversed)
.58 42. If I do well on a test, it's usually because I got lucky on it. (Reversed)
.60 45. When I do well on a difficult assignment it is usually because I worked hard.
.58 47. When I don't do well on an assignment, usually feel that I can do better next time.
.40 48. When I make up my mind to do well in school I usually succeed.
.45 50. I feel that I have the ability to do well in school if I want to.

Scale E. Student perception of student/teacher collaboration.

Cronbach's Alpha: .72. Items with corrected item-total correlations

.43 7. My teacher spends time talking to me individually about my schoolwork when it is necessary.
.39 15. My teacher gives us opportunities to make suggestions about activities in the classroom.
.44 16. My teacher asks me help other students with work in the classroom.
.27 20. It is important to my teacher that I understand my homework assignments.

.56 25. I feel comfortable making suggestions to my teacher about activities we could do in the classroom.
.54 30. My teacher is interested in hearing my opinions even when I disagree with her/him.
.33 40. I get help from my teacher when I need it.

Scale F. Student perception of parent valuing school.
Cronbach's Alpha: .72. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.28 9. My parent(s) rarely talk to me about how well I am doing in school. (Reversed)
.40 10. My parent(s) want me to participate actively in all classroom activities.
.37 23. My parent(s) expect me to tell them when I am having problems in the classroom.
.31 35. My parents remind me to get my homework done.

Scale G. Student perception of peergroup values.
Cronbach's Alpha: .63. Items with corrected item-total correlations
.38 14. My friends and I talk about our future plans, for school and after.
.30 19. When I am having trouble with something in class I feel free to ask other students for help.
.31 26. It is important to my friends at school that they have their assignments done on time.
.41 29. My friends don't stay home from school unless they are really sick.
.40 39. I enjoy helping other students in the class with their schoolwork.

Note: T1 N = 187; T2 N = 162.