

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A TEACHING STRATEGY:
ATTITUDES, OPINIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS IN THUNDER BAY**

by

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Faculty of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education



Lakehead University
Thunder Bay, Ontario
March 1988

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ISBN 0-315-44787-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed directly or indirectly to the preparation of this study. I gratefully acknowledge their contributions and assistance.

First are the members of my committee. Dr. Dan Klassen smoothed the path, allowing me to proceed on my way unhindered. Dr. Doug Thom provided me with a wealth of materials and took the time to give advice and suggestions. Dr. Mary Clare Courtland nurtured my intellect and gave me the encouragement only a good friend can provide.

I also acknowledge with thanks the helpful comments and guidance provided by other faculty members at Lakehead University.

The study would not have been possible without the permission kindly granted by the Lakehead Board of Education. A special thanks goes to the principals and teachers who welcomed me to their schools and classrooms. They freely donated their valuable time to help me obtain data for the study. I also appreciate the thoughtful ideas and opinions the parents in Thunder Bay shared with me.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank my husband Bob, who filled the roles of critic, editor, cook and housekeeper and gave inspiration through the hard times.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the 1970s and into the 1980s the communications media and educational theorists have reported and analyzed public dissatisfaction with school systems. One cause of this dissatisfaction is that school systems have become isolated from other institutions, such as the home, the church, and the media, which participate in the education of children (Goodlad,1984). Involving the home in the formal educational process could form a link between home and the school and, indeed, may be necessary to the survival of public education (Goodlad,1984).

The education of a child begins at home before he enters school and continues there throughout the school years. Acknowledging the value of and making use of the home educational process can greatly enhance the total educational experience of the child. Involving the home in classroom programs can promote better understanding between home and school and a positive public perception of educational systems. This study focuses on linking home and school. It investigates teachers' use of and attitudes to home instruction which is coordinated with the classroom program, and the attitudes of parents toward this practice.

Background

The formal education system is only one component in a child's education. The processes of education and socialization which contribute to the personality and the future of the child begin at the moment of birth. Until

the child begins formal schooling, socialization and education are intimately entwined and difficult to separate. Upon entry into the school system, however, considerable separation occurs. Generally, *education* becomes the task of the school, while *socialization* continues at home (Getzels, 1977).

Socialization can also be viewed as a concept which *encompasses* education. In this perspective, socialization comprises both cognitive and affective aspects of development, although the two are interdependent and difficult to isolate (Marjoribanks, 1979). Definitions by other authors also illustrate that education and socialization are processes which are closely related and take place at both home and school.

According to Brim (cited in Leichter, 1977, p. 6) socialization is "the process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and society." Goslin (cited in Leichter, p. 6) defined socialization as "what people learn, why they learn it and how they learn it." The definition proposed by Whiting et al (cited in Leichter, p. 7) includes "instructing, coaching, demonstration and training" which are methods "utilized in the processes of education and socialization alike."

While exploring ways in which young children were educated in the home, Tizard (1984) discovered that most teaching of academic skills by mothers was embedded in a social context. For example, a mother and child would count together the number of items delivered by the mailperson.

Education and socialization occur concurrently at home and school and are the responsibility of parents and teachers alike. Young children begin their learning experience at home and school attendance should give enrichment and extension to this learning, not replace it (Yardley, 1973). A

strong bond between home and school can link the processes of education and socialization in both environments and provide continuity in a child's educational experiences.

Failure to recognize that the processes of education and socialization must be related can result in a gap or discontinuity in the life of a child when he enters school. The gap, once established, grows wider as the child progresses through the educational system (Getzels, 1977; Comer, 1980; Tizard, 1984). The school climate can vary widely from that of the home in verbal interaction, physical environment, and focus of interest, causing a painful confusion for the child (Getzels, 1977; Wells, 1986). This confusion results in an inability, particularly in the child from a lower socio-economic status, to communicate with the teacher (Tizard, 1984). Getzels views the failure of children to communicate as the result of a deprived language background in the home. Tizard (1984), however, attributes the failure to communicate to the unfamiliarity of a school situation to the child. Regardless of the source, the difficulty in communicating and the resulting discontinuity in the educational process exist for all children. The assistance they receive in overcoming this disruption in their lives can determine how they will cope with school life. Providing this assistance is an important task for both parents and teachers.

Parental Attitudes

Parents usually hold high expectations for the futures of their children. Most want to help their children obtain an education because this is regarded as a ticket to a promising future (Marjoribanks, 1979; Roberts, 1980). Therefore, a child's success in school becomes an important matter to

parents. They develop attitudes and behaviours which have a direct bearing on the academic achievement of a child (Leichter, 1977).

One component of parental behaviour is the education of the child within the home. The amount of learning which the young child experiences in the home is extensive (Moore, 1979). Upon school entry, at approximately four years of age, the child is capable of sophisticated reasoning and has basic skills, but lacks general knowledge and conceptual frameworks (Tizard,1984).

Most children begin school with more knowledge of basic skills than educators realize. Children may possess basic academic skills but the strangeness of the school environment and the necessity of understanding the language of an adult other than their parents leads, in many cases, to an inability to communicate. Teachers may then believe that some children are slow developers, when in fact they are equipped with the necessary academic background to succeed in school (Tizard, 1986).

Home learning continues as children progress through the primary grades, diminishing but still existing at the junior and senior elementary levels and through high school (Strom & Cooledge,1984). If educators were to understand and become more knowledgeable about the extensive nature of home learning, they might be more inclined to use this resource and a powerful teaching strategy could evolve.

There are several ways in which parents can be involved in their children's schooling. These include participation in decision making, vocally supporting the school, instructing children at home or in the school, informing the community about the school, and participating in or offering training sessions on volunteer work within the school (Melaragno, Lyons &

Sparks,1981). Of these, instructing children within the home leads to the involvement of the largest number of parents as well as improved academic achievement for the children (Melaragno et al, 1981).

Although instruction in the home takes place concurrently with school instruction, there usually is little attempt by parents, teachers and administrators to link the two. More ways are needed to encourage parents to participate in their children's education at school (Hodges & Brandon, 1980). Parental involvement has beneficial effects for a child, yet few parents are actively involved with the school their child attends (Epstein, 1984). The reasons parents do not involve themselves with the schools are varied and complex. Their own unpleasant memories of school often make parents uncomfortable in a school setting and many feel unsure of their ability to assist their child in academic tasks. Time is an important factor for many parents, especially the single parent who is supporting a family and cannot volunteer in the classroom (Seefeldt,1985). The fast pace of contemporary life often does not allow parents time to become involved in the decision making processes that occur within a school and they often prefer to leave decisions such as discipline, scheduling of the school day, and curriculum to educators. However, if their child has learning difficulties, they want to be involved in decisions affecting that child (Cattermole & Robinson, 1985).

Teacher Attitudes

Teachers' attitudes toward parents and children are shaped by their perceptions of the academic and social successes or difficulties the children experience in school (Marjoribanks, 1979). Perceptions derived from communication with parents (particularly the mother) also influence the

teacher's attitude (Lightfoot, 1978).

The interaction between parents and teachers is complex and delicate. The professional and personal insecurities of the teacher and the inadequate self perceptions of parents all come into play during this interaction. In addition, mothers may feel that teachers are separating them from their children (Cohen, 1973; Taylor, 1977; Lightfoot, 1979). Therefore, positive communication and a cooperative approach on the part of both parents and teachers are necessary components of productive parent-teacher interaction. Meaningful parental involvement, such as home instruction which is linked to rather than separated from classroom programs, will contribute positively to parent-teacher relations.

In addition to parent-teacher interaction, there are other factors which affect the involvement of parents with teachers' programs. Although most teachers are aware of the powerful influences the home exerts on the child, many feel they are intruding into family life by expecting parents to involve themselves in classroom programs (Marjoribanks, 1979). Time to plan for parental participation is not provided for teachers, and parents may be regarded as a hindrance rather than a help in the educational process (Becker & Epstein, 1982b).

Historically, teachers have not involved parents in their programs--in the first half of the twentieth century parental involvement in school programs was virtually nonexistent. This is not to say that contact between parents and teachers did not exist; the teacher was a highly visible member of the community and contact occurred naturally outside the school setting. Because it was not part of the formal school program, however, the topic of parental contact was not included in teacher training (Comer, 1986).

Today the roles of home and school have become separate. Society has become more complex in many ways, including the relationship between parents and teachers. Despite this evolution in the relationship, appropriate training to prepare the teacher and to provide the assistance required to deal with the new situation still does not exist (Comer, 1986).

The Problem

Parents represent a major, underutilized resource in educational programs. Involving parents in the education of their children is a teaching strategy which would benefit parents, students and teachers alike (Segal & Yahraes, 1978; Comer, 1980) but the development and implementation of this involvement raise a number of complex problems and require increased knowledge and understanding on the part of both teachers and parents. Parents may be reluctant to participate in their children's schooling because they have been alienated by their own school experiences, they feel inadequately prepared to assist, or they are unable to build time into their daily routines. However, most parents do provide some academic instruction to their children. Teachers have inadequate understanding of the nature of the educational process in the home, are not trained to involve parents in their programs, and are often not encouraged by administration to foster parental participation.

The most beneficial aspect of parental involvement is the extension of the teacher's practice into the home with the use of home learning activities. Home learning activities produce academic gains (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore & Ouston, 1980; Melaragno et al, 1981; and Epstein, 1982) and the extension of the teacher's practice into the home can bridge the gap between

the educational processes at home and at school (Marjoribanks,1979). Also, using parents as a teaching strategy has the additional advantage of involving parents who are not able to be volunteers (Melaragno, et al,1981). The teacher, therefore, must be aware of teaching strategies that can extend the classroom program into the home and that, at the same time, will be perceived by parents as being feasible to administer.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to identify home learning activities endorsed by parents and teachers and obtain information which will assist educators in Thunder Bay to formulate appropriate programs. To accomplish this the study will investigate the attitudes and behaviours of parents and teachers in Thunder Bay toward home learning as a teaching strategy.

The findings of the study will provide answers to the following questions:

1. What home learning activities will be accepted by both parents and teachers of children in grades one to three?

The learning activities approved would indicate the kinds of activities that both groups would be comfortable implementing, and are therefore most likely to be used.

2. How do teachers in Thunder Bay feel about involving parents in their children's schooling?

Teachers' attitudes are an important factor in the implementation of parent involvement programs. If teachers are positive about including parents in the

education of their children, then parent involvement programs may be successfully implemented.

3. In Thunder Bay, what benefits exist for teachers if they involve parents?

Teachers who understand that there are benefits in using parents as a teaching strategy will more likely implement parent involvement programs.

4. To what extent are parents willing to be involved in their children's schooling?

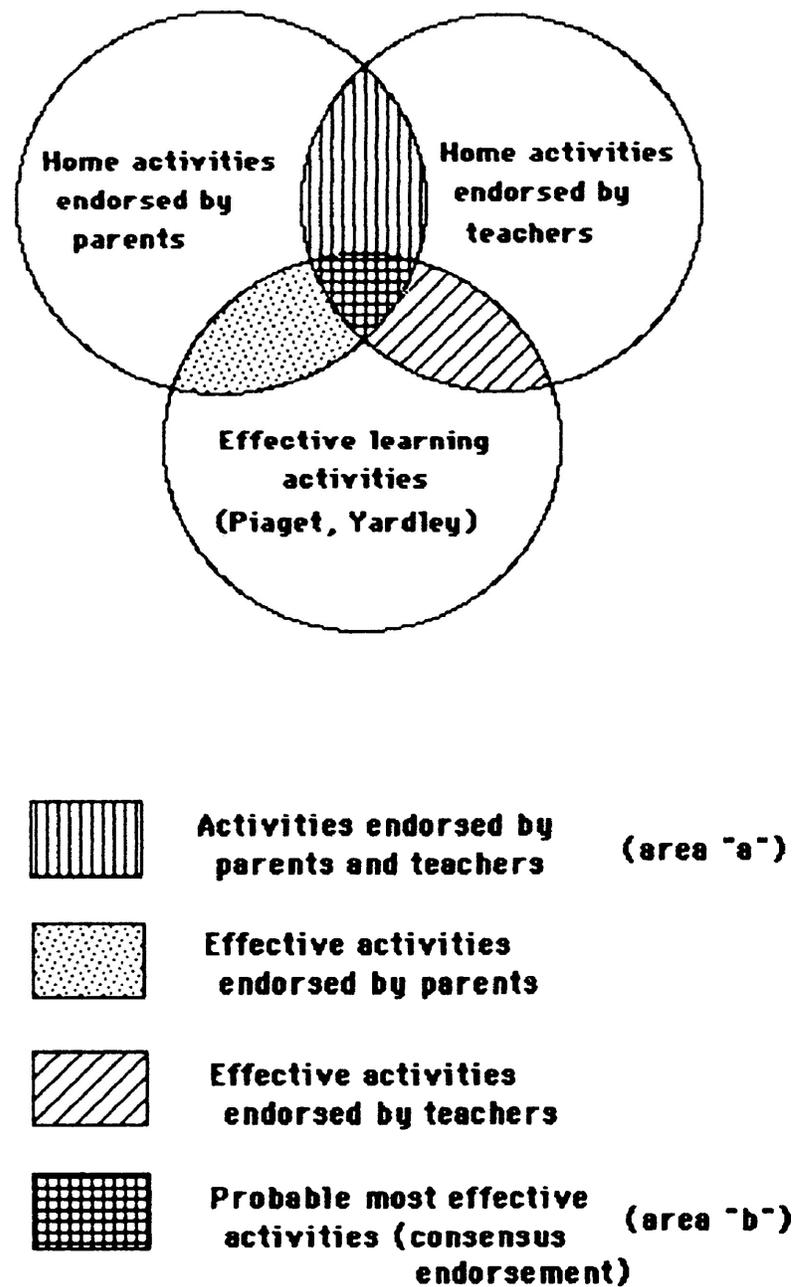
The participation of parents as well as teachers is necessary if teachers wish to use parents as a teaching strategy.

Focus of the Study

Figure 1 illustrates the the focus of the study and places it within a larger context of learning activity. One emphasis of the study was to determine home learning activities endorsed by parents (upper left circle); those activities endorsed by the teachers of these parents' children will also be studied (upper right circle). The area of greatest interest includes the activities endorsed by parents and teachers (area a in Figure 1). Figure 1 also indicates an area for potential future study; the educational value of the learning activities endorsed by parents and teachers could be evaluated by relating them to the work of theorists such as Piaget and Yardley (area b in Figure 1). Although interpretation of the home learning activities in light of various theorists is not a focus of this study, a brief analysis of some activities endorsed by parents and teachers will take place later in the paper.

FIGURE 1

Effective Home Learning Activities



Significance of the Study

The subjects of the study comprise the most important participants in a child's education: parents and teachers. Insights into ways of linking parents and teachers will be useful in formulating programs which can be beneficial to both groups. Teachers would see improved academic achievement in their students and would be rated positively by parents (Epstein, 1984). Epstein found that if the teachers can involve parents in their actual teaching practices and if parents can extend those practice into the home, parents will have better understanding of the educational process.

Parents could also receive benefits from the process. They would have the opportunity to spend worthwhile time with their children as well as helping their child achieve (Epstein, 1982). As the child grows older and the work becomes increasingly complicated, they can become learners along with their children (Ostlund et al,1985). Finally, as parents feel they have accomplished something worthwhile for themselves and their children, they will have achieved an improved self-image.

This chapter has stated the importance of home learning and the need to coordinate home and school educational programs. A discussion of parent and teacher attitudes has illustrated some barriers to establishing favourable parent-teacher relations. The teacher-parent relationship will be examined in more detail in Chapter 2. Studies, books and articles about home education and parent-teacher interaction will be reviewed and definitions of terms used throughout the paper will be explained. As well, hypotheses based on the review of literature will be included in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the sample, the questionnaire, and methods used in gathering and analyzing the data are described. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the

study based on the analysis of the collected data. Chapter 5 begins with a summary of the study followed by implications for parents and teachers. The study concludes with a discussion of the future of parental involvement in teachers' programs.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE, DEFINITIONS, AND HYPOTHESES

The literature reviewed in this chapter examines the roles of parents and teachers and how they interact with one another to create an educational experience for children. The works reviewed, which come from a variety of sources, describe studies on teacher and parent involvement and examine the importance of parents as teachers. Later sections of this chapter contain definitions of terms used in the study and hypotheses developed from the literature.

This study is based to a large extent on a major study carried out by Henry Becker and Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University in 1982. Becker and Epstein surveyed teachers, principals, parents, and students regarding their knowledge and opinions of parental involvement in the education of children. The study focused on grades one, three, and five; data were gathered from six hundred elementary schools in sixteen of the twenty-four school districts in the state of Maryland. Questionnaires designed to obtain input on parental involvement were returned by over three thousand teachers, principals, parents and students.

Teachers were questioned on their use of fourteen parental involvement techniques. These techniques were classified into five groups: reading, discussions between parent and child, specific formal learning techniques, contracts involving parents and children in specific learning activities, and techniques that develop the parents' instructional and evaluation skills. Results of the study indicated that over two-thirds of the

teacher-respondents favoured reading activities as most educationally beneficial.

When opinions were sought from teachers regarding the feasibility of parental involvement in their practices, two major viewpoints emerged. Some teachers felt the extension of their practices to include parents would threaten their professional status, while others saw parental involvement as a necessary component of their programs. Most teachers saw parental involvement programs as a positive concept, but many were doubtful regarding the implementation of such programs. Teachers who did involve parents in their programs were highly rated by these parents. Most teachers were aware of the strong parental influence on school achievement.

Most parents assisted their children in obtaining their education whether the school requested them to do so or not. The home instruction techniques used most frequently by parents when instructing their children were the same techniques that teachers favoured in their responses. For example, children reading to their parents was a technique supported by parents and teachers. Socio-economic status of the parents had no bearing on the frequency of use of the home instruction techniques.

A more recent study (Epstein, 1986) focused on both teachers who involved parents in their practices and those who were opposed to parent involvement. Parental reactions to these practices were also studied. Epstein found that parents wanted to be involved in home learning. Those parents who were asked by the teacher to become involved often assisted in the classroom. Parents closely involved in teachers' practices also contributed to the teachers' knowledge of home activities.

David Williams, Jr., the director of the Parent Involvement in Education

Project at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas, conducted a study (1984) about parent involvement which gathered information to be used in planning strategies for teacher training. The results of Williams' study indicated that parents were interested and willing to be involved in all aspects of their children's education, and that teachers were in favour of this involvement. Although teachers and parents were positive about parent involvement, their views on what kinds of involvement should take place differed. Teachers were in favour of the traditional, established methods of involvement and parents wanted to be more deeply involved. Williams attributed differences in attitudes between parents and teachers to an unwillingness on the part of teachers and administrators to share authority.

The notion that teachers, sociologists and others who study the effects of family life on the child can learn from the instruction of children by parents was explored by Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes in their study of Young Children Learning (1984). This study was conducted in England in the homes and schools attended by middle and lower socio-economic status children at the junior kindergarten level (about four years of age). The study focused on conversations between adults and children in the home and at school. Tizard and Hughes found that the learning experience in the home was far more extensive than at school and that home learning was informal and carried on within the context of everyday life. The authors also found that the level of oral language used in all homes was rich and there was little difference in the effectiveness of parental instruction between lower and middle class homes. However, children from lower socio-economic status homes had difficulty communicating with their teachers. The inability to communicate led teachers to believe that the children had received

inadequate learning experiences from their homes and were lagging in their development.

Tizard and Hughes suggested that, instead of assuming that parental instruction in the home is likely to be inadequate, professional educators learn more about parents' teaching strategies and consider incorporating these strategies into their programs. This finding echoed the work of Becker and Epstein referred to previously. These researchers suggested that educators look to parents for successful help in developing teaching strategies.

The work of Gordon Wells (The Meaning Makers, 1986) also described how children learn at home, and then continued the study to see how the home learning influenced the children's academic progress in school. Wells described the language development of a group of children from when they were toddlers of 15 months to when they had completed their elementary schooling. As Wells observed the interaction between parents and children, he assembled some important facts about how parents teach and children learn. Learning occurred when parents extended their children's ideas by sustaining and enriching conversations between themselves and the children. All parents, regardless of socio-economic status, were able to teach their children and, when they entered school, the children in the study were all proficient in oral language. Middle class children, however, were more successful in reading, writing, and in communicating with teachers. The middle class children came from homes where reading and writing were encouraged and modelled by their parents. In school these children did not have problems dealing with the world of books and writing. They were accustomed to these activities going on at

home. Lower class children not only had to learn to appreciate literary activities, but they also had to cope with the unfamiliar speech of the teacher, who was probably from a middle class background. Even if the teacher was from a lower status background, he had likely adopted middle class attitudes toward learning. Wells' work, as well as describing the influences of the home on learning, provided valuable information about assessing the effectiveness of learning activities.

Raymond and Dorothy Moore, in their works Better Late Than Early (1985) and School Can Wait (1979), were strong advocates of parents as teachers. They carefully considered the needs of children up to the age of nine and concluded that they can best be fulfilled by parents. They felt that only parents can provide young children with the proper balance of informal, unstructured, and consistent guidance necessary for learning. Young children are not ready socially, emotionally or cognitively to leave their homes and face the demands of institutionalized education. The Moores paid scant attention to the needs of parents who work and do not stay home to educate their children. They suggested that mothers who must work for financial reasons be given an allowance so they would be able to stay home. As well, parents who are not capable of implementing programs for their children could be assisted by an itinerant teacher. The Moores argued that formal, structured programs may hamper future academic achievement and they offered suggestions for some worthwhile informal home activities as they discussed the various stages of child development.

Evidence that parents from lower socio-economic status groups are concerned and willing to do something about the ways their children are educated is supplied by William Taylor and Ken Roberts in work edited by

Maurice Craft, John Raynor and Louis Cohen (1977). These authors explained how schools affect lower and middle class children, and how teachers attitudes vary toward the two groups.

Kevin Marjoribanks (1979), and Hope Leichter (1977) provided important insights into the extent of educational processes which occur within the family. Marjoribanks conducted an extensive study to determine factors which affect student achievement, including the influences of parents, teachers, and peers. The influence of parents was the strongest determinant of academic achievement, particularly when children were young. As the child grew older, peers became a significant influence unless the child was strongly involved in family activity. The study identified the importance of the interface between home and school in academic achievement.

Leichter's (1977) work also dealt with the educational process within the family. She considered the family as a unit which reflects every aspect of society including the education and socialization of children. Parental behaviour, including the mother's attitude toward the school and the child's teacher, has a direct effect on academic success. Her book is a collection of articles written by various authors, one of whom is Getzels (1977) who examined the discontinuity children experience when they begin school.

Lightfoot (1978), investigated the relationships between families and schools. She observed the interaction and communication in the classroom between parents and teachers and found that interaction in the classroom was more meaningful to both parents and teachers than an organized effort such as a home and school association. Lightfoot examined the conflict that often occurs when parents and teachers interact and described the fears and insecurities of teachers and parents in these conflicts. She concluded that

both parties must have more knowledge and understanding in order to provide a nurturing environment for the child. Lightfoot saw the processes of education and socialization as the responsibility of the home *and* the school.

The large, federally funded project, *Follow Through*, which was conducted in the United States, stressed parental involvement in many of its programs. Authors such as Hodges (1980), Melaragno (1981) and Keesling (1980) all reported positive effects of parental involvement in *Follow Through* programs. Keesling (1980) concluded that parental involvement should be mandatory in school programs.

Fullan (1982) devoted a chapter of his book The Meaning of Educational Change to parental attitudes toward change and involvement in school systems. He acknowledged the importance of home instruction as a form of meaningful parental involvement. Fullan, in his discussion of home instruction, noted that it rarely enriches or extends classroom activities but stresses basic mathematics and reading skills.

This chapter has reviewed literature which provides the foundation of the study. Authors of this literature have provided the background and information necessary to plan and carry out research on teachers, parents, and home learning. Others who contributed a great deal to the analysis of teachers' attitudes toward parents and parents' attitudes toward schools were John Comer in his book School Power (1980) and a volume edited by Maurice Craft entitled Linking Home and School (1981).

Definitions

This section will define and explain some of the terms used throughout the study.

Parents as a teaching strategy means that parents work routinely at home with their children under the guidance of the teachers. Parents do not work in a vacuum on single, isolated assignments. They understand the teacher's programs and how the home activities fit into the program. Parents may teach basic concepts or skills with guidance, if necessary, from the teachers. The teacher runs a program not only in the classroom, but in the homes of pupils, and the teacher's role shifts from teacher to teacher-manager.

A discussion of volunteerism and homework will clarify the concept of parents as a teaching strategy. Homework and parents as a teaching strategy can be considered as similar activities if parents work closely with the teacher as well as their children, and are closely involved in the teacher's programs. Homework, however, is often assigned to the child and expected to be completed without parent intervention taking place. Homework assigned in this manner may be viewed as an activity which builds character and develops good study habits (Featherstone, 1985). Parents may not be expected to assist the child or undertake any responsibilities in connection with the assignment. There may be no awareness of how the homework is connected to the teachers' programs, or what reasons the teacher may have for assigning the work.

Volunteerism can include the use of parents as a teaching strategy, but the volunteer usually helps the teacher in the classroom or on field trips (Taranto & Johnson, 1984). Parent volunteers may do work in their own homes for teachers, but do not necessarily concentrate their efforts routinely on their own children.

Throughout the study, the term parents as a teaching strategy is used

interchangeably with parent involvement and home activities. For example, parents favour the use of home activities means parents favour the concept of utilizing parents as a teaching strategy.

The word board, when used without further qualification, refers to the Lakehead Board of Education.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested were developed to answer the research questions stated in the previous chapter. The literature reviewed provided the basis for the formulation of the hypotheses.

The hypotheses are stated as follows:

1. The following home learning techniques are favoured by teachers and parents in Thunder Bay:

Parents read to their children regularly or listen to the children read aloud.

Parents ask their children to talk about what they did that day in the classroom.

These techniques were supported and used by parents and teachers in the Epstein study (Becker & Epstein, 1982a). It is therefore expected that these techniques will be received favourably by parents and teachers in Thunder Bay.

2. A) Teachers in Thunder Bay have positive attitudes toward parental involvement at the community level and at the classroom level.
B) Teachers' opinions about factors affecting the implementation of parental involvement programs are divided.

Reluctance by teachers to involve parents is noted by several authors (Epstein, 1982; Williams, 1984). Reasons stated for this reluctance include lack of training and necessary skills (Fullan, 1982; Marjoribanks, 1979; Comer, 1986), the belief that parents are unable to teach their children (Tizard & Hughes, 1984), and difficulties that parents and teachers experience when communicating (Marjoribanks, 1979). Becker and Epstein's work (1982), showed that about half of the teachers were unsure of involving parents in their programs.

3. Teachers who involve parents in their programs by utilizing the *parents as a teaching strategy* at home are favourably regarded by these parents.

Tizard (1984) discussed the trust and ensuing support that develops between parents and teachers when teachers think highly enough of parents to include them in their programs. In Epstein's study, parents did not necessarily rate teachers highly if the parents were involved in the school as volunteers, but high ratings were obtained from parents if they were involved in home instruction.

4. A) Most parents are willing to be involved in home learning activities with their children.
B) Socio-economic status of parents is not a major factor in the extent of this participation.

Parents at all levels of society are interested in helping their children with school work (Marjoribanks, 1979). Teachers perceive highly educated parents to be most likely to help their children (Tizard, 1984), but Epstein's study showed that parents help their children regardless of background. Along similar lines, Tizard (1984) found all mothers in the study instructing

their children at home.

Most parents want to be involved in home learning. Strom & Cooledge (1984) and Tizard & Hughes (1984) found that primary-aged children were instructed at home by their parents whether or not they were requested to do so by teachers, so it is reasonable to assume they would cooperate with the teacher in instructing their child. According to Marjoribanks (1979), parents are eager to discuss the importance of establishing a home-school learning environment.

These hypotheses will be tested using data collected from teachers and parents in Thunder Bay. The methods of gathering the data and testing the hypotheses will be outlined in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to describe as accurately as possible the attitudes and behaviours of parents and teachers in Thunder Bay toward home learning as a teaching strategy. The attitudes and behaviours which are identified may then be applied in a practical way, in decision making and in indicating avenues of further study. An empirical research design was considered to be most appropriate for the study. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey.

The Survey

The survey is a useful tool which may serve several functions in educational research. Orlich (1978, p. xiii) described the survey as a process which aids in:

- planning new programs, revising or improving current programs, or deleting obsolete programs
- determining the feelings, opinions, or attitudes of groups of individuals
- testing research hypotheses
- contributing to educational theory.

In this study, information obtained by the survey method will be used to test research hypotheses and determine the attitudes and opinions of parents and teachers in Thunder Bay.

The survey as a research method offers many advantages: Surveys

can produce an accurate description of the population under study (Kerlinger, 1973). Survey methods can reach large numbers in a population and can facilitate consistent presentation of information (Cates, 1985; Agnew & Pyke, 1982; Kerlinger, 1973). The subjects responding to a survey have the opportunity to reply without pressure or constraints (Agnew & Pyke, 1982). Their replies can be anonymous, so participants in the study can answer freely (Orlich, 1978).

There are disadvantages to the survey method (Kerlinger, 1978; Kish, 1979) but in the present study these were greatly outweighed by the advantages. Accordingly, a questionnaire survey was used to collect the data.

The Population and the Sample

The study took place in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a city of 115,000 people which serves as an educational centre for Northwestern Ontario. Thunder Bay is geographically isolated from the major population centres in the province and its citizens maintain an active interest in the local education systems. Educational issues arise frequently and are prominently featured in the local media.

The sample chosen for the study was drawn from a target population of teachers of grades one, two, and three and of the parents of children in those classes. The sample of grades one, two and three was selected for two reasons. First, parents spend more time instructing their children when they are in grades one to five than when they are in other grades (Strom & Cooledge, 1984). Therefore, the primary grades provided a potentially larger number and variety of parental instruction techniques to be studied. Second,

the primary grades represent the area of expertise of the researcher and therefore lead to a more effective and efficient analysis of the data.

A sample of teachers and parents which was representative of the target population and was manageable for the researcher was obtained by the cluster method of sampling. When using the cluster method to obtain a sample, the population to be studied is sub-divided into groups and the sample is drawn randomly and studied (Hamburg, 1977; Babbie, 1983). In this study, the clusters were represented by schools containing grades one, two and three. Nine schools were randomly chosen to participate.

Entry to the schools was at the discretion of the principal, who usually consulted with his/her staff before permitting the research to be conducted. Since "no research" was the policy in several schools, it was necessary to choose other schools at random to participate in the study. Nevertheless, principals and teachers in the participating schools were supportive, and the data obtained were sufficient for the researcher to describe beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behavior toward home learning.

Though opinions about sample size vary, it is generally agreed that the larger the sample, the more accurately the population to be studied will be represented (Kerlinger, 1973; Vockell, 1983). Smaller samples tend to represent the opinions of a minority, which may then be attributed to the entire group (Vockell, 1983). Hamburg (1977) states that a sample of thirty respondents is a general rule of thumb for an effective sample size, and that a sample larger than thirty may be regarded as a large sample. Accordingly, a sample of a minimum number of thirty teacher and parent responses was sought. The samples actually attained in the study consisted of 32 teachers (100% response) and 251 parents (35% response).

The Questionnaire

Survey data can be obtained by telephone or personal interviews, or through questionnaires. The mail questionnaire was selected to obtain data from parents. It appeared to be the most suitable instrument to determine teacher and parent involvement as a teaching strategy and to target strategies that are feasible for both parties to utilize with children. The mail questionnaire allowed the survey to be conducted by a single researcher and was therefore the most efficient and affordable method of gathering data. A large number of respondents was reached and at the same time sufficient breadth and depth of information was obtained.

The questionnaire used in the Becker-Epstein research was adapted for the Thunder Bay study. A questionnaire was distributed to both parents and teachers. The parent questionnaire asked about the nature of parents' contacts with the school, the kinds of instructional assistance they were requested to give to their children, their opinions about various home learning activities and their attitudes toward the school. Parents were also questioned about the extent of their involvement with the school and were requested to give demographic information. An open-ended question was inserted to allow parents to present their views on home learning.

The teacher questionnaire stressed contacts with parents, the extent of use of home activities, opinions on parent involvement techniques, and opinions about the worth and feasibility of implementing parent involvement programs. Demographic information was also requested from teachers.

Pretesting the Questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire was pretested with primary teachers from

Northwestern Ontario who were attending a summer Primary Education course in Thunder Bay. The parent questionnaire was pretested by several parents in Thunder Bay who made suggestions regarding the clarity and suitability of some questions. As a result of the pretesting, both questionnaires were reduced in length and the list of parental involvement techniques was edited so that items which were deemed to be inappropriate by either group were deleted. As a result, some items on the parent and teacher questionnaires about teaching techniques differ, but those of common interest to parents and teachers remain. The questionnaires were positively received and changes, for the most part, consisted of reducing the length of both questionnaires. Copies of the two questionnaires and covering letters are found in Appendices A, B, C, and D.

Gathering the Data

The teacher and parent questionnaires to be used in the study were submitted to the Ethics Sub Committee of the Senate Research Committee of Lakehead University for approval. The letter granting the committee's approval is found in Appendix E. After approval was granted, a letter was sent to the Lakehead Board of Education seeking permission to conduct the research in schools of the Lakehead Board (Appendix F). This permission was granted and the Board then distributed information kits to principals whose schools had been chosen to participate in the study. The kits contained a copy of the letter granting permission to carry out the research (Appendix G), copies of the questionnaires and covering letters and a brief outline of the study (Appendix H). Entry to the selected schools to perform the research was at the discretion of the individual principals.

Teacher Data. The teacher questionnaire was delivered by the researcher to the thirty-two teachers participating in the study. The researcher conducted classes for the teachers in order to provide them with release time to complete the questionnaire. Teachers were given a covering letter explaining their roles in the study (Appendix D). Teachers completed the questionnaire in approximately thirty minutes. Thirty-two completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher. One teacher participating in the study provided enrichment activities for pupils from various classes and was not responsible for a classroom.

Parent Data. Thirty-one teachers who participated in the study were requested to distribute questionnaires to the children in their classes to take home to their parents. The parent questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter and a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher in care of The Faculty of Education, Lakehead University. Parents were requested to mail the questionnaire rather than return it to the school; this helped to reassure them of the confidentiality of the responses.

Analysis

Previous research has indicated the importance of home learning in the development of the child. In order to exploit this important aid to learning effectively, it is necessary to know to what extent teachers incorporate home learning strategies into their programs, and how parents feel about using them. Effective learning activities must be supported by home and school, and this study has undertaken to identify these common activities.

The data collected were analyzed both quantitatively, using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, and qualitatively. Qualitative

analysis was applied particularly to the comments offered by respondents. The tests used in the analysis of this study were as follows:

Proportion Testing. Proportion testing is designed to test differences in the qualitative characteristics between two population samples (Hamburg, 1977). The test was applied to see if there was any difference between the proportion of favourable opinions of teachers and parents about home activities.

The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. The Spearman rank correlation establishes the "degree of association between two sets of scores" (Siegel, 1956, p. 195) and was used to determine whether or not parents' perception of teachers were related to use (by teachers) of home activities.

Test for Difference between Means: Two-Tailed Test. This test was used to examine the differences among high, medium and low status groups of parents (Hamburg, 1977).

Parents' Comments

Parents made 163 comments about home learning and school experiences involving their children. Their comments were sorted and classified according to the categories that emerged. The comments were used throughout the study to illustrate various aspects of the findings and the conclusions.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Although the sample schools were chosen randomly and approved by the Lakehead Board of Education, entry into each school also required permission of the principals and teachers. This permission was not granted

in all cases, and replacement schools were drawn to maintain an adequate sample, as previously described. As a result, the sample consisted of classrooms in schools where the principal and teachers were supportive of, or at least not opposed to, research being conducted in their classrooms. In addition, during the data gathering process it was evident that some teachers agreed on the importance of educational research, while others perceived it to be of limited value to the teaching profession. The extent of bias caused by the foregoing circumstances was difficult to determine, but biases of this nature occur frequently in educational research (Vockell,1983).

As with most studies of this type, the problem of non-response was present. Parent questionnaires were sent home with 713 pupils who were present on the days the research was being conducted in the classes. Parents returned 251 questionnaires, a response rate of 35%. Permission to pursue follow-up procedures to solicit more returns was not granted by the Board. As a result, procedures which would probably have increased the response rate to some extent were not possible. Because of this, it is likely that those responding were parents who had a greater interest in the use of home learning activities; those who had little or no interest in the topic would be less likely to take the time required to complete the questionnaire.

This factor limits the generalizability of the findings (Babbie,1983), but it is reasonable to expect that the opinions of the parents in this survey are similar to those held by many other parents. Since this was an exploratory study intended to determine effective home learning activities and attitudes of parents toward home learning, the responses of those interested in the topic will shed much light on the subject. The possibility that those not responding may have some different perspectives does introduce a bias and limits the

application to some extent, but this is considered to be an acceptable limitation.

The next chapter contains the findings of the study and the analysis of the responses.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Hypotheses

This chapter will present and interpret the findings pertaining to each of the four hypotheses presented in Chapter 2. The section Other Findings will discuss data that were not directly related to the hypotheses but which add important information to the study.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was concerned with identifying activities that were favoured by parents and teachers:

The following home learning techniques are favoured by teachers and parents in Thunder Bay:

Parents read to their children regularly or listen to the children read aloud.

Parents ask their children to talk about what they did that day in the classroom.

Teachers' programs which are extended to the home could be carried on more productively if both teachers and parents agreed on the effectiveness of activities to be used at home. This hypothesis examines the opinions of parents and teachers about the effectiveness of the home activities listed in the questionnaire. Knowing how parents and teachers feel about activities which could be used at home is information which can be used in formulating parent involvement programs.

Preferences for activities were examined by asking parents to evaluate the effectiveness of twelve activities and asking teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of fourteen activities. Eleven of the activities were common to both teacher and parent questionnaires.

All the activities were ranked in order of preference, for both teachers and parents; the order of preferences for both groups was also listed and compared. The differences in parents' and teachers' opinions were examined by proportion testing, and the results were tabulated. The differences between proportions of opinions of teachers and parents were calculated for each of the eleven activities which were common to the teacher and the parent questionnaire. These data are shown in tabular form later in this section, following the discussions of each item.

Parents' Opinions of Home Learning Activities. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 indicated that parents are interested in their children's learning and are willing to participate in that learning. An objective of the study was to discover which learning activities parents feel comfortable with when they are working with their children.

Table 1 summarizes parents' preferences for home learning activities. The activities are listed in order of preference based on the number of respondents considering the activity "effective or "not effective." The greatest number of parents rated reading to their children or having their children read to them as an effective learning activity. Achieving literacy is the primary goal of education everywhere (Spodek, 1985), so it is not surprising that 99.2% (243) of the parents who responded to the question would choose reading as an effective learning activity.

The next four activities (using home environment to teach, learning

Table 1Parents' Evaluations of Home Learning Activities

Activity	Percentage of Parents Considering Activities	
	Effective	Ineffective
Read to child; have the child read to you	99 (243)	.8 (2)
Use the home environment to teach the child	97 (236)	2.5 (6)
Parents plan lessons and teach	97 (233)	2.9 (7)
Drill math. or spelling with the child	97 (235)	3.3 (8)
Play games that help the child learn	97 (230)	3.4 (8)
Ask the child about his/her school day	95 (229)	5.0 (12)
Watch and discuss TV shows with the child	92 (220)	7.6 (18)
Take the child to the library	91 (218)	9.2 (22)
Borrow books from the teacher	90 (206)	10.4 (24)
Visit and observe the classroom	85 (198)	15.4 (36)
Make a contract to supervise the child's work	73 (163)	27.2 (61)
Agree to give awards for good performance	68 (159)	32.1 (75)

Note. Number of responses shown parenthetically.

how to plan lessons, drilling math or spelling, playing learning games with the child) were very closely ranked. These activities (except for playing learning games with the child) directly involve parents in teaching their children and may indicate that most parents were eager to assume an active role in their children's education.

The remaining activities do not directly involve parents with teaching their children, but could help to develop attitudes toward learning. Asking the child about the school day, watching and discussing TV, taking the child to the library, and borrowing books from the teacher were perceived in much the same manner by parents. Parents contracting to give their children awards for good performance and behaviour was the activity favoured by the least number, although over half the parents found that activity effective.

Teachers' Opinions of Home Learning Activities. Teachers' responses about the effectiveness of the activities could be classified roughly into three groups. These responses are summarized in Table 2. Teachers rated activities that would assist the child to improve reading skills highest. Teachers, like parents, believed that learning to read is the most important aspect of schooling, and Table 2 shows that 100 % of the teachers surveyed rate reading as a beneficial activity. As well, all the teachers in the study rated the reading-related activities--loaning books to parents, taking the child to the library, and playing learning games with the child--as effective.

The second rated group of activities could contribute to improving the learning environment in the home, but do not involve formal teaching by the parents. This group of activities included watching TV, the child asking parents questions, parents using the home environment to teach, parents incorporating children into their activities, and asking the child about the

Table 2Teachers' Evaluations of Home Learning Activities

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Considering Activities			
	Effective		Ineffective	
Parents read to child or have child read.	100	(32)		
Parents take child to the library.	100	(32)		
Family play learning games with child.	100	(32)		
Parents borrow books from the teacher	100	(32)		
Watch and discuss TV programs with the child.	97	(31)		(1)
Child ask parent questions about experiences	97	(30)		(1)
Parents use environment to teach child.	97	(30)		(1)
Parents incorporate child into their own activities.	94	(30)	6	(2)
Parents ask child about the school day.	88	(28)	13	(4)
Parents contract to supervise and assist.	84	(26)	16	(5)
Parents observe classroom.	81	(26)	19	(6)
Parents learn teaching techniques.	81	(25)	19	(6)
Parents contract to give awards for good behaviour and performance.	77	(23)	23	(7)
Parents fill out evaluation form about program.	71	(22)	29	(9)

Note. Number of responses shown parenthetically.

school day.

The third, and lowest-rated, group of activities involved parents in a more formal manner, where they could make agreements to work with the child and actually teach lessons. They would also have the opportunity to evaluate the teachers' programs. These activities would take a great deal of time for the teacher to administer, and in the case of teacher evaluation, may constitute a threat.

Comparing Teacher and Parent Opinions on Home Learning Activities. Table 3 shows the rankings of parents' and teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of the activities listed, based on the number of respondents favouring each activity. Although the percentages listed indicate that all the activities were received favourably, the rankings show that some activities were definitely favoured by more respondents than others.

With both parents and teachers, more respondents considered that reading, either the parent reading to the child or the child reading to the parent, was an effective learning activity. This agreement illustrates the value placed on literacy by both groups. Fewer parents, however, rated other reading-related activities, such as taking the child to the library and borrowing books from the teacher, highly. The lower numbers endorsing these activities could result from working parents not having time to take their children to the library, or parents having sufficient reading materials in their own homes.

It is interesting to note that classroom visitations for the purpose of viewing how the children in a class react to the learning environment in that class were well down in the ratings, although still endorsed by over 80% of respondents in each group. Classroom visitation and observation are traditional methods for bringing parents and teachers together, but the

Table 3Parents' and Teachers' Opinions About Home Activities

Activity	Parents		Teachers	
	% Effective	Rank	% Effective	Rank
Parents read to child or have child read	99	1	100	1
Use home environment to teach child	98		97	6
*Parents learn how to teach child	97		81	10
Play learning games with child	97		100	
Ask child about the school day	95	5	88	
Watch and discuss TV shows	92	6	97	
*Take child to the library	91	7	100	
*Borrow materials from the teacher	90	8	100	
Parents visit and observe the classroom	85	9	81	9
Parents contract to supervise and assist	73	10	84	8
Parents agree to give awards for good performance and behaviour	68	11	77	11

Note. The asterisks indicate differences significant at .10

artificiality of the situation that arises when teachers and pupils prepare at length for these visits may outweigh the benefits.

The activity on which the two groups agreed the least was parents learning how to plan lessons and teach their children at home. It appears that parents would like to participate in their children's education at a more formal and structured level. From the teachers' points of view, monitoring such a process would constitute a major role change, requiring additional training in curriculum and management.

It seems that parents and teachers were in most agreement about activities they rated as least effective. Formally agreeing to supervise work at home and to give awards for performances were commitments that neither parents nor teachers wished to assume.

Determining Differences in Opinions About Home Activities Between Teachers and Parents. Proportion testing was used to determine whether or not a significant difference existed between the proportion of teachers who considered an activity effective and the proportion of parents who considered the activity effective. The test for the difference between proportions was carried out at the 10% level of significance. Significant differences in opinions were found in three activities. These are indicated by asterisks in Table 3. The calculations are shown in Appendix I.

The hypothesis stated that, "Parents read to their child regularly or listen to the child read aloud," and "Parents ask their child to talk about what he did that day in the classroom," would be the activities rated as effective by the largest number of parents and teachers. On the basis of the information obtained, the hypothesis is partially supported. Most parents and teachers agreed that reading was the most effective activity. If parents and teachers

agree about the effectiveness of reading, then it is reasonable to conclude that activities involving various aspects of literacy would be acceptable to parents.

Parents and teachers were not in agreement concerning the second activity mentioned in the hypothesis. The results showed that although "Parents getting their child to talk about what he did that day in the classroom," was rated highly by both groups, teachers favoured the activity more than parents. Teachers, more than parents, may be aware of the importance of oral language in developing literacy in children.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis concerned attitudes and opinions of teachers towards parental involvement and was stated in the following terms:

- A) Teachers in Thunder Bay have positive attitudes toward parental involvement at the community level and at the classroom level.
- B) Teachers' opinions about factors affecting the implementation of parental involvement programs are divided.

The importance of linking the home and school learning experience has been outlined in Chapter 1. The literature previously discussed stated that although teachers are in favour of the *concept* of parental involvement, some barriers exist in the *implementation* of such programs. Identifying and describing the attitudes of teachers toward parental involvement is a necessary prerequisite to understanding and overcoming problems involved in planning and implementing programs which include parents.

A. Teacher Attitudes

Teachers' attitudes toward parent involvement were described by

analyzing their responses to the following items in the questionnaire:

- In this community, parent involvement is not an answer to the major problems of the schools--the schools must solve problems on their own.

Do teachers make enough use of parental resources in their programs?"

Teachers were then invited to comment on barriers to the implementation of parental involvement programs. Their comments were classified according to categories that emerged from the analysis of the data.

At the community level, 75% of the 32 teachers sampled disagreed with the statement that parental involvement is *not* an answer to educational problems in the community, while the remaining 25% agreed with the statement. Community level participation of parents in education could be significant to teachers, potentially involving the parents in decisions affecting budget and curriculum. The growth of French immersion classes is an example of parental influence on curriculum at the community level.

At the classroom level, teachers were asked if they made enough use of parental resources in their programs. Thirty-nine per cent of the teachers surveyed answered that enough use was made of parental resources, while sixty-one per cent thought parents should be used more. A summary of teacher responses about the sufficiency of classroom level parent involvement is presented in Table 4, along with percentages of use by teachers of home learning activities, as reported by parents.

Table 4 shows teachers who indicated that there was *enough* parental involvement made use of more home activities than teachers who indicated that there was *not enough* parental involvement. The strength of

Table 4Teachers' Opinions of Sufficiency of Use of Parental Resources and Reported Use of Home Activities

Teachers' Opinions on the Sufficiency of Use of Parental Resources (% of teachers holding each opinion)		% of Home Activities Used by Teachers, as Reported by Parents
Enough use	39	35
Not enough use	61	26

the relationship between teachers' opinions about parental involvement and use of home activities was tested by the chi-square test [X^2 (df=1, N=31) = 3.243]. The difference in the percentages in Table 4 was significant at the .10 level.

It appears that the largest group of teachers in the survey wanted to increase their involvement with parents, but were encountering barriers in implementing appropriate programs.

Teachers' comments about barriers to implementation gave some insights into their problems. The comments were classified into the following categories: Parental Cooperation, Programs Involving Parents and School Environments.

Parental Cooperation. Statements about parental cooperation accounted for 11 of the 28 comments made by teachers. Teachers gave a variety of reasons for lack of parental cooperation, the two most frequent being: parents who work do not have the time to become involved with the

school, and many "just are not interested." In some areas of the city, parents do not seem to have the time to attend interviews, so involvement in a teacher's program which would take even more time, seems to be unrealistic.

One teacher explained the situation as follows:

It is difficult to even get parents in for interviews. We tried a parenting course here and I think that helped. An open door policy has to be established so parents do not feel threatened by school and teachers.

Several teacher comments indicated that some parents in the community have a generally uncooperative attitude toward the school system and wish to maintain a distance from the schools. Possible reasons for parents' uncooperative attitudes have been discussed earlier in the study, but teachers who are not aware of these reasons may only perceive some parents as uncooperative.

Teachers' Programs Involving Parents. There were 12 teachers in the survey who commented that they felt inadequately prepared to involve parents in their programs. The educational system has neither provided them with the training nor the materials to carry out parental involvement. One teacher stated:

I don't know how to get parents to come to the school to observe, help out, or be involved with my program in their homes. I would like to be able to go to them, but I have to limit my contacts to phone calls due to time restrictions.

Teachers perceived their own attitudes as barriers to implementing parent involvement. They found themselves lacking in a number of attributes including: efforts to contact parents, belief in themselves as teachers, trust in others, positive attitudes about programs, and sufficient motivation to implement programs. These comments suggest that teachers are in need of

professional development which would help them increase the expertise and confidence necessary to successfully involve parents.

Several teachers noted that parent programs conducted in the evenings or, preferably, on weekends would help to involve parents. Most teachers, however, considered that their workload was already heavy and did not wish to add to it by participating in such programs.

School Environments. Opening up the school environment was seen by five of the teachers as one way to get parents more involved in their programs. Organizing social programs and creating an open, inviting atmosphere in the schools were among the suggestions offered.

B. Teacher Opinions About Factors Affecting Implementation

Though many teachers would like to increase parent involvement in their programs, implementation poses difficulties. Teachers gave their opinions about five statements on the questionnaire which related to implementation of parent involvement programs (Table 5). There was definite agreement that parents who spend time in the classroom are more likely to help their children at home, and most teachers agreed that it was unrealistic to ask parents to work an hour every day with their children. There was less agreement on the other three statements. Opinions about the amount of information parents would like to have, and the parent training necessary to help with school work, were evenly divided. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers doubted that they would be able to influence parents to help their children.

The lack of pronounced agreement or disagreement with the last three statements may indicate a need among teachers for the direction and knowledge necessary to implement parent involvement programs. It appears

Table 5Teachers' Opinions About Parent Involvement

Statement	Teachers' Opinions	
	Agree	Disagree
If parents regularly spend time in the classroom, they usually make a greater effort to help their children at home.	91%	6%
It is unrealistic to ask parents to spend a full hour a day working with their children on academic achievement.	72	28
Many parents want more information about curriculum than most teachers provide.	48	52
Most parents do not have enough training to help their children.	50	50
Teachers can only provide parents with ideas -- they cannot influence them to use these ideas.	69	31

that many teachers may not have the expertise or confidence in their abilities to influence parents to become involved with their children's schooling.

In summary, Part A of Hypothesis 2 appears to be supported by the evidence in the study, i.e., that teachers in Thunder Bay hold favourable attitudes toward involving parents in their children's schooling. Most teachers indicated that there was not enough parental involvement at the classroom level. The endorsement of parental participation, however, is not strong. Comments made by teachers emphasized the realities and the day-to-day concerns about involving parents.

Part B of Hypothesis 2 was definitely supported by the information gathered. The lack of agreement among teachers about certain dimensions of parent involvement illustrated the doubts and insecurities discussed in Part A.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 investigated how parents who were involved in teachers' programs felt about the teacher who requested the use of home activities. The hypothesis was stated as follows:

Teachers who involve parents in their programs by utilizing the parents *as a teaching strategy* at home, are favourably regarded by these parents.

It was noted earlier that, if a parent worked closely with a teacher, the parent's perception of that teacher was positive. This hypothesis investigated the extent of the positive perception of teachers that occurred when the teachers in this study included parents in their programs.

To test the hypothesis, parents' perceptions of teachers were

correlated with requests by teachers to utilize home activities.

Parents' Perceptions of Teachers

Parents' perceptions of teachers were determined by a scale of positive and negative attributes designed to approximate parents' feelings about teachers. Parents were asked to identify five positive items (cooperation, friendliness, respect, trust and warmth) and five negative items (conflict, misunderstanding, distance, lack of concern and tenseness) describing their perceptions of teachers. Each item was assigned equivalent weight and a score from zero (negative) to ten (positive) was computed for each teacher.

Table 6 shows parents' perceptions of teachers. Teachers in the survey were generally positively perceived by parents and the largest group of parents (62) perceived teachers *most* positively. The following comment from a parent was typically supportive:

I think we have almost unreasonably high expectations for elementary teachers to teach each child at his/her own level in a variety of subjects. If this is what we want, then parents will have to help at home with reading, finishing assignments and helping with major projects. With it being out of style to stream students, parents of average and bright children will have to supplement at home both academically and culturally. My child's teacher works very hard to provide everything to all students and uses parent-helpers productively in the classroom.

Teachers' Use of Home Activities

Table 7 shows how often teachers requested parents to use some home activities with their children. The number of teacher requests is small and seems to indicate that little use of home activities is made by teachers. This finding concurs with the Becker-Epstein study which described teacher utilization of parent-oriented activities as "not intensive" (Becker & Epstein, 1982a, p. 87).

Table 6

<u>Perceptions of Teachers by Parents</u>	
Perceptions*	Number of parents
10	62
9	46
8	37
-	22
6	32
5	10
4	14
3	16

2	3**
	0**
0	1**

* Values range from 10 (most positive) to 0 (most negative)

** These samples were not considered large enough to be included in the test for significance.

Table 7Teacher Requested Use of Home Activities

Activity	% times teachers requested use of activities					
	Never		Occasionally		Often	
Take child to library	88.2	(217)	9.8	(24)	2.0	(5)
Parent contract to supervise work	87.8	(216)	8.9	(22)	3.3	(8)
Watch and discuss TV show	87.0	(215)	7.7	(19)	5.3	(13)
Borrow materials from teacher	81.4	(201)	17.4	(43)	1.2	(3)
Play learning games with child	80.2	(198)	12.6	(31)	7.3	(18)
Parent ask child about school day	76.5	(189)	7.3	(18)	15.8	(39)
Sign child's homework	74.4	(183)	17.1	(42)	8.5	(21)
Use things at home to teach child	73.7	(182)	19.4	(48)	6.9	(17)
Visit and observe classroom	69.2	(171)	26.3	(65)	4.5	(11)
Child practice math or spelling drills	57.5	(142)	27.5	(68)	15.0	(37)
Help your child with worksheets	56.7	(140)	30.4	(75)	13.0	(32)
Read to child or listen to child read	51.4	(126)	28.2	(69)	20.4	(50)

Note. Number of responses shown parenthetically.

Parents reading to their children or having the children read to them was the most requested activity. While parents and teachers agree that reading activities are effective learning experiences, opinions vary about how the activity should be carried out. Reading would be an effective learning activity if the material presented ideas that would interest the child and would lead to a sustained, child-initiated discussion between parent and child (Wells,1986). Otherwise, a reading session can be a frustrating and ineffective experience for both parent and child.

Helping the child with worksheets and drills was another frequently requested activity. Activities of this nature appear to offer limited learning opportunities. Rather, they involve rote learning which does not encourage the child to apply higher thinking skills (Wells, 1986).

Activities which could extend learning as well as involve basic skills, such as playing learning games, using things in the home to teach and watching and discussing TV programs, were infrequently requested.

Parents' Perceptions and Teacher Use of Learning Activities

The data were analyzed to determine if there was any correlation between parents' perceptions of teachers (Table 6) and requests for use of home activities (Table 7). The Spearman Rank Correlation test was used to test this relationship. The results showed a slight positive correlation between positive parental perception of teachers and the use by teachers (N=31) of home activities, but it was not significant at the .10 level ($r_s = 0.05012$, $df = 29$, $t = .2702$).

As noted elsewhere in this study, both parents and teachers favour the use of home activities, yet parents appear only slightly more positive in their perceptions of teachers who use home activities. There are many variables

other than use of home activities which could influence parents' perceptions of teachers. For example, children's perceptions of teachers and the successful or unsuccessful academic progress of pupils could have an effect on how parents feel about teachers. Also, some teachers who ask parents for help may only do so when their pupils experience academic difficulties (Taylor,1977). A teacher in the survey stated her perception of home activities as follows:

I use home activities if a child is in trouble. Parents can't be expected to teach a child the basics, but can help by drilling math and phonics concepts.

If parents are asked to help only when a child is experiencing difficulties, they may consider that the teacher is lacking in professional competency and that they must patch up a situation which should have been dealt with by the teacher. A comment made by one parent in the survey sums up this point. She stated:

I feel something is lacking in a school system that asks for as much participation from parents as it does from its teachers.

Parents in the study were not requested to rank teachers according to their professional competencies. It may be possible that a parent could respect the ability of a teacher to teach and still hold negative perceptions of that teacher. The existence of other variables affecting parents' perceptions of teachers makes it difficult to establish with confidence the effect of using more home activities. A much more detailed study would be required to determine if there was a significant relationship. Parental rating of teachers is a very sensitive issue and such a study might be regarded with disfavour by teachers' professional groups and administrators.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 described parent involvement and socio-economic status. To simplify the analysis, the hypothesis was examined in two parts as follows:

- A) Most parents are willing to be involved in home learning activities with their children.
- B) Socio-economic status is not a major factor in the extent of this participation.

The hypothesis was tested by analyzing parents' responses to questions about how much time they would be willing to spend with their children if the teacher showed them what to do, how often they have had the time and energy to do what the teacher expected them to do, and how often someone in the family reads to their children. Parents' responses were correlated with the socio-economic status.

Socio-Economic Status

Education, income, occupation, or a combination of these three dimensions, are usually used to establish socio-economic status (Hunter, 1981). For the purposes of this study it was decided that occupation, as measured by Blishen's scale (1976) would be the indicator of socio-economic status. Blishen rated occupations on a scale ranging from 1 to 480, 1 indicating the highest level, and 480 the lowest level. The occupations of the questionnaire respondents were assigned a rating, then divided into three groups of high, medium and low status. Status was determined by the occupation of the male member of the household or the occupation of the single parent (Delphy, 1981).

Occupations of the largest number of respondents (88) fell into the

high status group. The medium status group consisted of 56 respondents, and the low status group consisted of 83 respondents. Parents whose occupations were not included in Blishen's scale (24) were not included in the analysis. This group of parents comprised students, unemployed, housewives, or those who did not respond to the question.

Time Parents Are Willing to Spend With Their Children

Parents, in their comments about home learning, were positive about spending time with their children on home activities. The comments below represented many parents' attitudes toward home activities:

Our children are in Senior Kindergarten, Grade two and Grade three. So far they have not had any activities to do at home other than math or reading practice, so we teach them on their own. If there is something they are interested in we get books from the library--e.g., an "otter" book or a book on magic. We let them have real money for playing store and we have all kinds of craft material to help them use their imaginations. We would like to know what they are doing in school so we could use the teachers' ideas to make the things we do at home even more interesting.

Another parent commented:

I feel that kids should have more school work to do at home so they spend more time on constructive things rather than watching TV or bullying each other around the house. During the week they should always bring something home. Otherwise, I most often hear them say, "I am bored." The day they bring some project from school, they are busy and behave better too. I always find time to work with them and to talk to the teachers about their work.

The comments indicated that many parents were willing to work with their children. To find out how much time they were willing to spend if they were requested to do so, parents were asked to indicate this time on the questionnaire. Weighted averages were then calculated to show the average amount of time parents in each status level were willing to spend. Table 8 shows that the average amount of time spent by high status parents was somewhat less than low and medium status parents. Several high status

Table 8Amount of Time Parents Are Willing to Help Child Daily

Status of parent	Minutes per day helping child	Number of responses	% Respondents
High	15	11	13
	20	11	13
	30	33	37
	40	2	2
	50		
	60	<u>30</u>	<u>34</u>
	Total:	88	100

Average minutes per day willing to spend = 37.6

Medium	15		12
	20	13	23
	30	16	29
	40	0	0
	50	0	0
	60	<u>20</u>	<u>36</u>
	Total:	56	100

Average minutes per day willing to spend = 36.5

Table 8 (cont.)Amount of Time Parents Are Willing to Help Child Daily

Status of parent	Minutes per day helping Child	Number of responses	% Respondents
Low	15	3	4
	2	8	10
	30	32	30
	40		
	50	3	4
	60	36	43
	Total:	83	100
Average minutes per day willing to spend = 42.3			

parents wrote comments indicating that they felt that young children would learn more effectively if work periods were brief and informal; perhaps the number of work periods would be a better indicator of parental commitment than the total time spent. One high status parent who commented about structured time periods set aside for school work stated:

I find, personally, that I can help my children attack any problems they may have, but mostly we share activities with them that go beyond the classroom--birdwatching, music, electronics, cooking, etc.

Higher status parents may also be more involved with their careers and have less time available to spend with their children.

To determine if there was a significant difference between the amounts of time parents in each status level were willing to spend with their children, a test for difference between means (Hamburg, 1977) was applied. Differences of means at a 10% level of significance, between low and medium, low and high, and medium and high status groups, were calculated. Results showed that there was no significant difference between medium and high groups in the amount of time parents were willing to spend working with their children. Between medium and low status groups, and between high and low status groups, there were differences, both of which were significant at the 10% level. The calculated values are shown in Appendix J.

In summary, based on the parents participating in this study, the low status group of parents was willing to spend more time working with their children, on a daily basis, than the high and medium status groups.

Cooperation With the Teacher

Responses from parents to the question, "How often have you had the time and energy to do as the teacher requests?" are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of Parents Performing Teacher-requested Activities, by
Status Level

Frequency of Compliance with Teacher Requests
(% Respondents at each frequency level)

Status	Never	Sometimes	Half Time	Most Times	Nearly Always	Total
High	3 (2)	. (5)	11 (8)	34 (25)	45 (33)	100 (73)
Medium	19 (8)	5 (2)	5 (2)	29 (6)	43 (24)	100 (42)
Low	6 (3)	5 (3)	13 (7)	24 (13)	52 (28)	100 (54)

Note: Number of responses shown parenthetically.

Forty-five percent of the high status parents "nearly always" did as the teacher requested, and 3% "never" did as the teacher requested. Forty-three percent of the medium status parents "nearly always" did as the teacher requested and 19% "never" did as requested. The low status group had the highest rate of response (52%) in the "nearly always" category and only 6% in the "never" category. The medium status group had 19% in the "never" category. The responses of the low status group may indicate, as discussed previously, that they were eager to assist their children to achieve in school.

Reading to the Child

When asked how often parents read to their child, responses indicated that while all status groups read to their children, the high status parents read to their children more frequently than the other groups (Table 10). This finding agrees with Wells (1986), who noted that reading material played a more important part in higher than in lower status homes.

Summary

Part A of Hypothesis 4 was supported by the analysis of responses to the questions, "How much time would you be willing to spend working with your child at home if the teacher showed you what to do?", "How often have you had the time and energy to do what the teacher expected you to do?" and "How often does someone read to your child?" Most parents surveyed said they were willing to spend time working with their children, usually did as the teacher requested, and often read to their children.

Part B of Hypothesis 4 investigated whether socio-economic status was a major factor in the amount of time parents were willing to spend working with their children. High and medium status parents indicated that

Table 10

How Often Someone Reads to Child, by Status Level

Status of Parent	Frequency of Reading Activities (% of Respondents at each frequency level)				Total
	Rarely or never	1 or 2 days each week	3 or 4 days each week	Almost every day	
High	3 (8)	20 (31)	26 (43)	49 (80)	100 (163)
Medium	6 (3)	35 (18)	24 (12)	35 (18)	100 (51)
Low		32 (8)	19 (21)	41 (46)	100 (111)

Note: Number of responses shown parenthetically.

they were willing to spend less time than low status parents working with their children in a manner directed by the teacher, and were not as likely to do what the teacher requested them to do. The test to determine differences in means showed a difference at the 10% level of significance in the time willing to spend between high and medium groups, and high and low groups of parents. The difference between medium and high groups was not significant. The hypothesis, therefore, was supported in part. Low status parents were willing to spend more time working with their children than high and medium status parents. Perhaps high and medium status parents have more confidence in their abilities to help their children, and depend less on the teacher for ideas and guidance, than lower status parents.

Other Findings

Parents' and Teachers' Attitudes

Examining attitudes of parents and teachers toward home learning helps to present a comprehensive picture of the population studied. To identify attitudes, questions were included which were similar in the questionnaires sent to both groups.

The first question concerned information-sharing between parents and teachers. Parents were asked if they would like to learn more about their child's program by talking to the teachers more often, and teachers were asked if they believed that parents wanted more information about curriculum to be sent home.

Only half (50%) of the teachers believed that parents wanted to have more information about curriculum, but a large majority (88%) of the parents responded that they would like to know more about their children's programs. Parents' opinions on the subject were illustrated by the following comments:

When access to the classroom is restricted, it is difficult to ascertain the goals of a particular level of schooling. I would appreciate knowing what the specific objectives are for each year and how these would be achieved. By knowing these, I could assist more creatively at home.

Another parent commented:

Communication between teacher and parent is absolutely essential to develop a solid learning environment. I would like to see more sharing of information between home and school.

The differences of opinions about information sharing could lead to a misunderstanding and possible animosity between parents and teachers.

Perhaps the nature of the information teachers and principals send home is not specific enough to attract parents' attentions. For example, a letter explaining a school-wide discipline policy may not interest parents unless it contains references to their children's classes.

The second attitude question concerns the adequacy of parents' abilities and training to assist their children with academic endeavours. Both groups were asked if parents had enough training to help with reading and mathematics. One-third (32%) of the parents believed that they did not have enough training to help their children, but over half (51%) of the teachers considered that parents were not sufficiently trained.

Most parents in the study felt confident enough to instruct their children at least while they were in the primary grades; teachers did not agree with this confidence, finding the parents of children in their classes insufficiently prepared to do so. These differences in perception may indicate a need for better teacher education to help teachers realize that most parents are capable of instructing their children (Tizard, 1984; Moore, 1979); at the same time, it is likely that many parents may require more knowledge about child development and learning processes.

The third attitude examined concerned how parents feel when they visit their children's schools. The questionnaire asked parents if they agreed, agreed somewhat, or disagreed with the statement, "I am uncomfortable spending time at my child's school," and teachers were asked about their opinions on the statement, "Many parents seem to be uncomfortable spending time at the school."

The two previous attitude questions showed differences in opinions, and this question was no different. Over three quarters (76%) of the parents

disagreed with the statement (i.e., they felt comfortable in the school); in contrast, only 16% of teachers believed that parents were comfortable (Table 11). There could be many reasons why teachers perceive parents this way, but parents may simply not spend enough time in the school for teachers to understand their reactions and responses to the school setting.

Parents' Opinions' About Satisfying and Unsatisfying Home Activities

Home activities, if they are to be used effectively, must be satisfying experiences for parents as well as children. Ideally, activities should have the approval of both parents and teachers, and be educationally sound. [This was discussed earlier, p. 11 and Figure 1, p. 10]. Activities which are satisfying experiences are more likely to be used by parents, so identification of these activities is necessary when planning parent involvement programs. Parents were questioned about what kinds of activities they had been requested to use and had found to be *most* and *least* satisfying (Tables 12 and 14). Further information was obtained by asking parents to state the reasons *why* they found the activities to be *most* or *least* satisfying. The responses are summarized in Tables 13 and 15.

Having their children read to them was the most satisfying activity that parents had been requested to carry out (Table 12). This is consistent with parents' opinions, stated earlier (Hypothesis 1, p. 34), that reading was the most effective home activity. Several parents commented that it was rewarding for them to see their young children master such an important skill. Parents also found that working on projects with their children was a satisfying activity. Project work is likely to be the type of activity many parents experienced in school, so working with their children on projects could be an

Table 11

How Comfortable Parents Feel at Their Children's Schools: Perceptions of
Parents and Teachers

<u>Parents:</u>	I am uncomfortable spending time at my child's school.		
	Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree
	7%	17%	76%
	(17)	(41)	(188)

<u>Teachers:</u>	Many parents seem to be uncomfortable spending time at school.		
	Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree
	19%	65%	16%
	(6)	(20)	(5)

Note. Number of responses shown parenthetically.

Table 12Activities Parents Found Satisfying

Activity	% Parents Finding Activity Satisfying	Number of parents
Child read to parents	37	49
Projects	32	43
Drills (Phonics, Math, Spelling)	10	14
Homework (Printing, Games)	8	11
Math	5	
Field trips	3	
Discuss school work	3	
Evaluating child's work		
Parent read to child		

area with which they feel familiar and hence, comfortable.

Table 13 summarizes the reasons *why* parents found activities to be satisfying. First, parents liked to see that learning was taking place as they worked with their children, i.e., that an activity was effective in promoting learning. Second, many parents seemed to enjoy their children's company, and liked to work along with them.

Tables 14 and 15 list the least satisfying activities and the reasons why these activities were unsatisfying. Activities centred around mathematics were listed as least satisfying. Several comments from parents suggested a dislike for mathematics which extended to working in that subject with their children. One mother stated:

My son is having difficulty with math. This is an extremely hard situation for me because I was not good in math and I'm still not. It's hard enough trying to help them with multiplication, and when they get into algebra I don't understand it myself.

There was, however, little difference in the number of responses for the first five items (math, drills, homework, child reading and projects) in Table 14.

The reasons parents did not find some activities satisfying are stated in Table 15. The response to this question was not large (42 respondents), but opinions are important to know for future planning of home activities. Perhaps the lack of response was linked to the infrequent use by teachers of home activities (see Hypothesis 3, p. 48)

Parents cited home activities which posed difficulties for the child and home activities which did not promote learning as least satisfying. Both these reasons could suggest that the child's stage of development should be matched to the home activity, and that the parents should be informed about the learning objectives of the activity. Some parents reported that they were

Table 13Reasons Parents Found Activities Satisfying

Reasons	% Parents Finding Activities Satisfying	Number of Parents
Learning took place	45	58
Parent found working with child enjoyable.	40	52
Parents had opportunity to evaluate child.	9	
Parents liked to work on specific activities.	6	8

Table 14Activities Parents Found Least Satisfying

Activity	% Parent Responses	Number of Parents
Math	21	9
Drills (phonics, math)	19	8
Homework (finishing work, creative writing)	17	-
Child reading	17	
Projects	17	
Play	5	
Marking	2	
Field trips	2	

Table 15Reasons Parents Found Activities Unsatisfying

Reasons	% Parents Responses	Number of Parents
Child had difficulty	26	
No learning took place	26	11
Parent was unprepared	24	10
Parent-child conflict	18	-
Parent evaluated child negatively	5	
Activity was boring		

unprepared to administer the activity because they did not possess enough information, or did not have enough training to help.

Seven respondents discussed the conflicts that occur when they work with their children. An example of the frustrations that arise is expressed by the following quotation:

I understand that parent cooperation in helping the child at home with lessons is essential. However some parents, myself included, just do not have the patience at times to teach a child. I find I am quickly frustrated and impatient when my child does not try to stop and think before she answers a question. I only want the best for my child and I feel subjecting her to home lessons with me cannot be of too much help.

Another parent commented:

If possible, have the children bring some instruction home as to how they were taught a particular lesson. It is hard to help a child with his homework when the teacher explains it one way and the parent explains it another way. The child is confused and gets frustrated. He takes the teacher's way as Gospel Truth !

Two parents were shocked to learn that the amount of knowledge their children had acquired was inadequate for the completion of the home activity. One parent complained; "I didn't like the activity because I found out he didn't know *anything* ."

More knowledge about activities that would satisfy parents, good program planning, and good parent-teacher communication would likely help to overcome the objections of parents who found home activities unsatisfying.

Contacts Between Parents and Teachers

Teachers and parents may make personal contact with one another on special occasions such as parent nights or Christmas concerts, but routine contact occurs when a parent volunteer works in the classroom or during parent-teacher interviews. Although repeated efforts on the part of the

teacher are sometimes necessary, interviews are generally attended by the majority of parents. Occasionally, teachers may hold special programs for parents on parents' nights to inform them as a group about the school program for the year or give information on topics of interest such as child abuse. Other contacts occur on a casual basis; usually in the form of a telephone call if the child is experiencing social or academic difficulties.

The questionnaire requested teachers and parents to report on various topics they discussed with each other, and the findings are reported in Tables 16 and 17. Table 16 shows the topics of conversations with teachers as reported by parents. Classroom work and behaviour were the most common topics of conversation between parents and teachers; activities which could connect the school and home experience were reported as discussed by only 24% of the parents.

Time allotted for discussions between parents and teachers is usually brief and teachers must select topics they feel are most important. Table 17 shows that the child's academic strengths and weaknesses and classroom behaviour were the most frequent interview topics, probably because most teachers consider these topics important. Activities that the parents could be doing at home were routinely discussed by only four teachers; this topic does not seem to be considered of great consequence by teachers.

Teachers in the study indicated that most topics were discussed *only as the need arises*. Discussing topics on a need-to-know rather than on a routine basis could mean that important program information is omitted. However, as indicated earlier in the study, teachers believed (probably erroneously) that parents already possessed sufficient information about their children's programs.

Table 16Parents' Reported Conversations With Teachers

Topic	% Parents Reporting Topic	Number of Parents
Child's behaviour	58	142
Child's classroom work	65	158
Child's report card	26	62
Activities parent could help with at home	24	59
Homework	12	30
Parent did not talk with teacher	9	23

Table 17Conversations With Parents As Reported By Teachers

Topic	Frequency of Discussion of Topics (% of teachers reporting each frequency)		
	Routinely discussed	As need arises	Never discussed
How reading and math are taught in the classroom.	16 (5)	81 (26)	3 (1)
How the children spend each part of the day.	19 (6)	81 (26)	0 (0)
How the children are disciplined and why.	9 (3)	91 (29)	0 (0)
The academic strengths and weaknesses of the children.	56 (18)	44 (14)	0 (0)
How well the children behave in the classroom.	47 (15)	53 (17)	0 (0)
Goals for reading/math for the children.	22 (7)	75 (24)	3 (1)
What the teacher feels should be done at home in regard to the children's school programs.	13 (4)	88 (28)	0 (0)

Note: Number of responses shown parenthetically.

Finally, parents were asked their opinions about the statement that "teachers should *not* try to show parents how to help their child learn things at home. That is the teacher's business." Most parents (86%) disagreed with the statement, but several parents qualified their disagreement in their comments. They felt that home activities that are part of the school program should take place only if the child was having learning problems. This view is illustrated by the following comment:

If the child is having difficulty in some areas, then I think the work at home (if the parents know what they are doing and can teach the child the proper steps) is beneficial.

Parents' Comments

Parents were asked to comment about any aspect of home learning activities they wished. They were very forthcoming with their opinions on home learning and school experiences involving their children. Their comments were analyzed and classified into categories. The most frequent categories are listed below (number of comments in each category is shown parenthetically).

1. Positive comments about home learning, their child's teacher or the school (54).
2. Comments about communication with teachers and administration (37).
3. Barriers encountered in administering home activities (34).
4. Suggestions for home learning activities (22).
5. Negative comments about their experiences with teachers or administration (16).

Total comments: 163

Most comments were positive statements about home learning,

teachers or the school. Some parents considered home activities as a way to demonstrate affection and interest in their children, while some felt that home activities would increase academic achievement and form good work habits. Other parents perceived involvement in their children's education as part of their duties or responsibilities in rearing their children.

Many parents were eager to with maintain good communications with their children's teachers. Parents were anxious to know about the academic progress of their children, and were concerned that they be informed as soon as learning difficulties occur. If parents wished to teach children at home, they wanted to see or be made aware of curriculum documents for their children's grade levels.

Barriers encountered by parents when they worked with their children arose mainly from lack of information about the assignment the children had been given. Parents did not understand teaching techniques or how the assignment would be evaluated. They wanted to understand the standard or level of work the teacher required. Some parents led busy lives and could not find time to help their children, and others became frustrated when their children could not complete assignments easily.

Parents offered a variety of suggestions for home activities. One view of home activities was that they should be fun and serve as motivators for work in school; other parents thought home activities should consist only of drill and reinforcement of the basics. Several parents wanted to know how to prepare and teach lessons. Some wanted unstructured time allotments for home activities, and others suggested regular work periods and evaluation by the teachers.

Only sixteen of the comments were negative. Parents related

unpleasant encounters they had experienced in their contacts with teachers and administrators. Most complaints did not deal directly with home activities, but with the lack of individual attention children received from teachers.

The general tone of the comments was positive and indicated a strong interest in helping the child through home learning activities; at the same time there was a concern about the best way to do this.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of this study will consist of a summary and discussion of the findings, implications of these findings for parents and teachers, and directions for future study for the use of parents as a teaching strategy. The summary and discussion will describe the parent involvement of the sample in the survey, examining the practices and attitudes of parents and teachers towards home learning. Previous studies have shown that home learning is considered to be a vital component in the education of young children. Accordingly, the determination and analysis of attitudes and opinions of parents and teachers were the focus of this study. The implications for parents and teachers section will evaluate the concept of parental involvement and offer suggestions for implementation. The study will close with the discussion of future trends in parent involvement and suggestions for future research.

Summary and Discussion

In the first hypothesis, parent and teacher evaluations of home activities revealed that there was, for the most part, substantial agreement about the effectiveness of these activities. Significant differences in opinions about effectiveness were detected in only three activities. Two of the activities which were perceived as highly effective by teachers, but less so by parents, were concerned with literacy.

Taking their children to the library or borrowing books or materials

from the teacher were rated as less effective by parents than by teachers. Parents, however, appeared to be anxious that their children learn to read and rated oral reading as the most effective activity in the survey. The contradiction arising from these findings poses the question of how well parents understand the development of literacy in children. Informing parents about the characteristics of worthwhile learning activities will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Another area of disagreement about the effectiveness of home activities concerned parents who were learning to plan and teach lessons to their children. Parents considered this activity to be effective but teachers held a significantly different opinion. One explanation for teachers' lack of enthusiasm about parents teaching their children may be that teachers do not have confidence in the abilities of some parents to carry out the task (Williams, 1984). Teachers underestimate not only the knowledge that parents possess, but also their willingness to work with their children.

The notion of parents actually teaching may also be regarded by teachers as an intrusion into the role traditionally held by teachers. If parents shared the role of instructor with teachers, the practice of teaching and the teaching profession would undergo major changes which may not be acceptable to many teachers. Teachers belong to an organized group or institution which offers them stability, structure, authority and an opportunity for advancement within the structure. Reaching beyond this structure is a radical change and would require extensive and intensive professional development on the part of teachers. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand teachers' reluctance to accept the idea of sharing the basic duty of planning and teaching lessons with parents.

In contrast to the views of teachers, most parents approved of the idea of formally teaching their children. The following comments illustrate how parents felt about the issue:

I feel parents do have and should have involvement in teaching at home and at school. Too many parents feel it is solely up to the teacher and the school. I disagree. I enjoy teaching and helping my children with their school work and I am involved with different activities in the school. I don't wait to be asked. I volunteer.

I feel home/parent interest and involvement with school work is vital to the success of children in school and the development of a good attitude to school and learning in general. If the children see that the parents feel school and learning is important, it will influence their attitudes and therefore their effort in school.

Although parents who did not support the idea of teaching lessons to their children were in the minority, many emphasized opinions similar to the following:

I don't believe we, as parents should have to teach our children at home. We can assist, show interest in what they are doing, and be there for them if they need us, but not teach reading, writing etc. A parent's time should be quality time, or just giving them what they want. Talking, watching TV together, teaching them as a parent, right from wrong, honesty and sharing is our job, then it just makes it easier for the professionals to do their job.

Although teachers were less enthusiastic than parents about home instruction, they nevertheless endorsed the idea of involving parents with the schooling of their children. Teachers were positive about parent involvement, not only at the classroom level but at the community level where parents could influence curriculum.

The willingness of teachers to reach out to parents did not, however, extend to the actual implementation of parent involvement programs. Many teachers who felt that there should be more parental involvement made little use of parents in their programs. For some teachers, barriers to the

implementation of parent involvement programs seemed, at the present time, insurmountable. Lack of time and knowledge of how to formulate programs and lack of parental interest contributed to their reluctance to use parents as a teaching strategy. As well, teachers indicated that they did not have enough confidence in their abilities to influence parents to become involved. They also were not in agreement about the amount of information parents should receive, the time parents should spend with their children, or the amount of training parents should have. In short, many teachers did not see the concept as being realistic.

If change is to occur and barriers to the implementation of parent involvement programs are to be overcome, then there must be benefits in the situation for teachers. Literature shows that parents who were involved and informed about school programs were more likely to hold positive attitudes toward schools and teachers. Agreeable parents who support and encourage their children's teachers would be a significant asset to teachers.

The concept of parent involvement as a benefit was investigated by examining the attitudes of parents who were involved by teachers in their children's programs. Parents' comments revealed that their children were usually included in these programs *if they were experiencing academic difficulties*. Utilizing parents under conditions which occur only when remedial help was needed did not promote a strong positive image of the teacher in the eyes of parents. Parents positively perceived teachers who made use of them as a teaching strategy, but the degree of this positive perception was not statistically significant and was not considered to be a benefit to teachers.

The study showed that parents were willing to be involved in their

children's school work regardless of their socio-economic status. All groups of parents in the study would spend time working with their children if asked to do so by the teacher. Parents in the lower status group in the study were, in fact, willing to spend more time than middle and high status parents in working with their children under the direction of the teacher and carrying out the teachers' requests. Higher status parents were less willing to spend time working with teachers on home activities and offered opinions such as the following:

Home activities should not be mechanical. Ours are spontaneous--they develop from our children's interests. We try to answer all their questions or get a book on subjects they are interested in. My son does not respond well to external suggestions that he practice reading or math--these activities have to be at his own initiative.

The lower socio-economic group, by indicating that they were willing to work and cooperate with the teacher, showed that they were using the educational system as higher groups do--for the social and economic advancement of their children. The finding was emphasized by this parent's comment:

I think teachers should let parents know how to help the children. We take a very active role in our daughter's education because we feel that education is the only thing that is going to help her get along in this world when she grows up.

Teacher and parent responses also differed when both groups were asked if parents wanted more information about the curriculum. Parents, in their responses and comments, indicated that they wanted to know more about school curricula, yet most teachers felt that parents were given enough information. Parental comments suggested a strong concern about poor communication between parents and teachers. Parents repeatedly stated that they would like to see text books or curriculum guides. Lack of

information about what is going on in a child's classroom appeared to be a source of frustration for many parents.

Divergent opinions also emerged over the issues of parents having enough training to help their children at home and parents not feeling comfortable in their children's schools. These items from the questionnaire illustrated the differing opinions of parents and teachers and emphasized the gap between them.

Parents gave their opinions about the effectiveness of learning activities and, later in the questionnaire were asked to identify and give reasons why they found certain activities satisfying or unsatisfying. Parents liked to hear their children read and also liked to work along with them on projects. Seeing learning taking place and working on projects together were sources of satisfaction for parents.

Math activities, drills or homework consisting of work not finished in school were identified as unsatisfying activities. This latter group of activities may have been frustrating to parents. If the children could not complete these activities in school they probably could not do them at home, and an unpleasant situation developed.

Parents and teachers make contacts in a variety of ways, the commonest of which is the interview. This section of the findings examined the question of topics discussed when parents and teachers contact each other. Parents reported that their conversations with teachers centred around their children's behaviour and classroom work. Teachers reported that they mostly talked about academic strengths and weaknesses and classroom behaviour. Other information was given to parents only as the need arose. Most teachers in the study did not routinely discuss topics such as curriculum

or home activities with parents.

Implications For Parents

Parents of today differ from those of just a few years ago. They are older and better educated. They know more about child rearing than ever before. Their babies are seen not only as family members to raise and cherish, but as interesting objects to observe and study. Much has been written lately about the "hurried and harried child" (Neugarten, 1987) as parents, armed with flash cards, prepare to give their children a head start in the world. Perhaps parents regard the early learning as a buffer against failure, for they perceive failure of their offspring to be their own, personal failure (Comer, 1980).

Enrolment in day care facilities, nursery school, and junior kindergarten is a commonplace occurrence today. Early schooling, parents believe, will enhance their children's education and provide caregiving at the same time.

There is much controversy among both parents and educators over the content of early education programs. There are currently two major approaches to such programs: one presents very young children with abstract concepts usually not encountered until at least age seven, while the other allows them to learn through "direct encounters with their world" (Elkind, 1986, P. 631) and is based on stages of development.

The debate is not confined to questions of content. Some experts view any early schooling as a negative factor in children's development. They conclude that since parents are the first and most important teachers, children should remain at home under their parents' care until the age of

eight (Moore, 1975).

Children begin to lead their own lives upon school entry. The school takes over the parents' role for a large portion of the children's waking hours. It seems only natural that parents would want to know how the teacher is instructing, and what is going on in the school setting.

Very few parents in this study were indifferent to their children's educational experiences and they repeatedly stressed their desire for more information and communication with the school. Even parents who were content to delegate all forms of academic learning to the educational system wanted to know how their children were responding to school. Parents who did not receive enough information from the school and did not know where their children stood stated that they would like access to curriculum guides, specific marks, standardized tests and text books. Some parents felt that knowledge of how their children stack up with others of the same age would help them structure appropriate home learning activities.

Parents in this study rated teaching and planning lessons as an effective learning activity. School, as they likely remember it, was a series of lessons delivered by the teacher who was regarded as the source of all knowledge. As parents, they wanted to repeat this role of teacher when working with their own children. Parents may be disappointed with the response from educators if they request information about teaching lessons. Teaching a mathematics concept, for example, may involve repeated manipulation of a variety of materials in a variety of situations, rather than a guided paper and pencil exercise. In the absence of information about how their children were learning, parents wanted the same type of information that *their* parents had received in the past.

What parents need to know is an important topic for future study, and will be dealt with only briefly in this paper. Parents need to share knowledge about learning with teachers (Fantini, 1980). Knowing about learning processes must no longer be knowledge that only the teacher possesses. Programs will not be supported by parents unless they understand them (Mackenzie & Amiet, 1985). An atmosphere which promotes learning is an essential teaching tool, and structuring the home environment so that school work becomes an enjoyable and important factor in children's lives is a good place for parents to start. Poor achievement in school is not due just to poverty or lack of ability, but to the emotional tension created in the minds of children when the atmosphere of the home is unfavourable to intellectual work (Sharrock, 1970).

Parents should understand the development of literacy so they can watch their children become beginning, emergent and full-fledged independent readers and writers. Parents should know about the language immersion environments that are created in classrooms, and how it is possible to create a similar environment in the home.

Knowledge about learning will help to dissolve some of the mystique that surrounds teaching, but the crucial and all important question remains: How can knowledge that parents have attained about learning be connected with the teacher's program in the classroom? The answer to this question is complex and will only be solved with time and extensive, patient research. However, part of the responsibility for bridging the gap between home and school learning must fall to parents. Parents need to let teachers know how much they are aware of the need to connect their teaching with the school. This research indicated that even well educated parents who were engaging

their children in stimulating learning situations did not try to link these situations with the program that was going on at school.

Teachers need to know how much time parents are willing to give up to work with their children. Teachers are not likely to implement a program as complex as using parents as a teaching strategy unless they have assurances that parents will cooperate.

The parents who participated in this study indicated that they were willing to work with their children. Low status parents wanted to work with their children under the teacher's supervision. Higher status, better educated parents, though cooperative with teachers, seemed to feel that they were able to work in parallel to the teacher and did not require guidance. Some parents wanted direction from the teacher to help their children with basic skills, while others helped their children study topics the children had chosen. Parents indicated in their comments that they were prepared to continue to assist their children as long as they felt capable, and parents surveyed indicated that they *were* capable enough to help their children. Parents recognized themselves as instructors of their children not only in the preschool years, but during the early school years as well.

Parents who are knowledgeable and willing to assist their children must inform the teacher of these facts, even if they are opposed to the concept of parents as a teaching strategy. Lack of information is not a problem that only parents must deal with; it is also a problem for teachers.

Implications for Teachers

The teachers surveyed in Thunder Bay held positive opinions about parental involvement. Their comments suggested that they understood that

parental involvement was beneficial and wanted to find out more about procedures to utilize parents. They were perceived positively by the parents whose children were in their classes. The support they received from parents was evidence of good relationships that had been developed through the existing methods of parent involvement. The extent of parent involvement as a teaching strategy, however, was minimal, and most teachers indicated that there should be more involvement.

Involving parents presents problems that teachers are poorly equipped to handle at the present time (Williams, 1984; Roberts, 1980). The fact is that teachers come in frequent contact with parents, but aside from the few days some boards set aside for parent interviews and some isolated professional development, little is done about training them for parental involvement. Lack of teacher training and education could also lead to teachers overlooking the benefits in parental involvement which, though important, are not immediate (Comer, 1980). Despite these problems, most teachers in the study realized the importance of increasing parental involvement, but did not know how to go about it.

Before the actual mechanics of programs utilizing parents as a teaching strategy can be formulated, teachers must learn more about parents. It was clear that teachers in this study were not aware of parents' opinions on several issues in the survey. Teachers and parents had divergent views on whether or not parents were comfortable in schools, how parents felt about their abilities to help their children, and the amount of information given to parents concerning their children's programs.

Information sharing between parents and teachers is a two-way street. Both parties must be willing to communicate and be open about any facts that

could affect the development of the child. Teachers not only need to know about their pupils, but need information about families as well (Ochiltree, 1983). Knowledge about families would help teachers understand differences in children from higher and lower socio-economic status groups. Teachers do not believe that children from lower status homes have the same potential for academic achievement as middle or higher status children (Tizard, 1984), nor do they believe that lower status parents are as concerned about their children's progress (Roberts, 1980). Lower status parents in this study indicated that they were willing to help their children if the teacher requested. Teachers need to be aware that these parents, as well as higher status parents, can be used as a teaching strategy.

Formulating teaching strategies that will be satisfactory to parents of differing socio-economic status while at the same time educating their children according to their various needs is a task of enormous proportions that many teachers find overwhelming. One teacher commented, "This topic is too complex for me to discuss. I would need to read, have more time, materials and guidance to use parents in my program."

The difficulties involved in implementation have led teachers to use parents to assist their children mainly if remedial help is required. Sending mathematics, phonics drills and workbook pages home occasionally is much easier for a busy teacher than planning units which routinely include an element of parent participation. While some practice may be necessary, problem solving, exploration and experimentation are important for the development of higher levels of thinking (Schickendanz, York, Stewart, & White, 1983) and should be stressed, rather than omitted from home activities.

Parents, when asked why particular activities were satisfying or unsatisfying, reported that observing learning taking place was the most gratifying experience that resulted from working with their children. If parents are asked to reinforce what has already been presented and not learned, they are not likely to see learning happen. Another reason that remedial programs may not be satisfactory material for home learning is parents' lack of skills and training. Although parents are more skilled and knowledgeable than teachers realize (Tizard, 1984; Williams, 1984; Bowd & Boylan, 1986), they still may not be able to conduct successful remedial programs for children with learning problems. Remedial work may best be left in the hands of trained specialists.

Teachers must be prepared to share more information with parents. Parents in this study repeatedly asked for information about curriculum and wanted to learn how to prepare and conduct lessons with their children. Teachers' feelings about sharing trade secrets with those outside the profession are easy to appreciate. Teachers feel that informing parents about teaching methodologies could be threatening. Including others in the teaching process could lead to a change in roles or to loss of authority (Williams, 1984). Teachers also may underestimate the abilities of parents to understand the material, and feel that the information could be misused. When possible, contact between parents and teachers should be on a personal level. According to Cattermole & Robinson (1985), parents, when asked how they would like to receive information, preferred personal contact to having information sent home. They were, however, appreciative of personal notes and newsletters. Non-attendance at interviews, as teachers in this study reported, can be overcome by rescheduling or asking parents when

they would like the interview to take place. Accommodating parents who do not attend interviews is a difficult task for teachers-- still, every effort should be made to meet parents face-to-face.

For teachers, even with the assistance of a supportive and innovative administration, involving parents means reaching out and taking risks. Teachers who are comfortable practicing within the educational institution may not wish to be exposed to disinterested parents or parents who oppose the idea of involving themselves with teachers. There are parents who will feel that teachers are shirking their responsibilities when they ask parents to share in the schooling of their children. There are parents who reject anything school systems have to offer, yet teachers must keep in mind that most parents are supportive not only of their children's teachers, but also of the notion of involving themselves closely in their children's schooling.

The Future

Parents and teachers both realize the importance of using parents as a teaching strategy, but need to understand that present methods of involving parents in program implementation need to undergo changes. Teachers' roles will shift towards a managerial emphasis but, with proper training and education, teachers will lose neither their status nor their authority (Epstein, 1985). Teacher training at the preservice level and teacher education for experienced teachers is necessary if meaningful parent involvement is to occur.

Professional development needs to be regular and ongoing, and should address the needs of teachers who will change their programs to include parents (Fullan, 1982). Appropriate leadership is also necessary if

parent involvement is to occur. Principals who recognize parental involvement as a priority and give teachers involved with parents their support will help to effect the program change.

An important focus for future research is the exact nature of programs that teachers will need to formulate to successfully involve parents in their programs. Teachers have to know which activities are effective as far as learning is concerned and, at the same time, are satisfying to parents. This study provided information about parents' and teachers' preferences for effective and satisfying activities; future research could extend the study to carry out *intensive analysis* of the value of these activities and what place they should take in teachers' programs. Care must be taken not to impose too much structure when school programs are formulated to include parents. The special quality of a vibrant, stimulating classroom environment should be retained and not damaged when home and school programs are linked (Schickendanz & Sullivan, 1984).

Teachers are not alone in the need for assistance to involve parents in their programs. Parents also need support to carry out their part in a teacher's program (Comer, 1986). Ochiltree (1983) suggests that parents be included in the formulation of parent involvement programs, in order to secure their cooperation. If parents are included in program planning, they may experience a greater sense of ownership in the programs and be more willing to work with their children in support of the teachers' efforts.

School boards occasionally offer courses to help parents who wish to be involved with their children's schooling. Faculties of Education could also offer parent education courses on an ongoing basis, stressing instructional methods appropriate to the developmental levels of their children. The

information gained from parents who attend these courses could be incorporated into teacher training and education.

Parents and teachers are positive about parent involvement, but meaningful parent participation has yet to materialize in most school systems.

Organized attempts are in progress within some school boards or districts but, since little research has been conducted on which to base these programs, they usually exist only because of a specific need that has arisen and not as a matter of routine or as an established component of a teaching program (Catermole & Robinson, 1985). With positive attitudes on the part of teachers, parents, and educational administrators, the involvement of parents as a teaching strategy will occur. Patience on the part of all those involved will be required, for the change, though it represents better education, will occur slowly.

The following comments are from a parent who is aware of the nature of parents' responsibilities and appreciates the importance of parents and teachers working together to provide the best educational experience for children.

You cannot depend on the school alone to educate a child. There must be parent involvement--in at-home teaching and within the school as liaison between parent and child. When the teacher or school is failing to meet the needs of the child it is up to the parent to first recognize and second remedy the problem. If discussion with the teacher does not rectify the problem, then the parent must be ready to pick up the slack. I think that no system dealing with such numbers could give each child the continuing special attention that a parent can. It is therefore imperative that both parents and teachers understand each others' roles in educating a child. I am willing to do this -- are the teachers?--other parents? This does not appear to be the general feeling. It seems to me as though school and home, teacher and parent are separate systems rather than parts of the same system. My involvement at school has always been as a result of my effort to remain a part of my son's education.

This thoughtful comment sums up the requirements for effective use of

parents as a teaching strategy: a recognition by both parents and teachers that their activities are complementary rather than competitive, and are part of *one* educational program; that every "educator" (parent or teacher) should do those things which each can do best; and that there must be understanding, cooperation, and open communication between parent and teacher. If these conditions are present, then education will surely be a more satisfying experience for the child, the parents and the teacher.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE ON HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

This questionnaire has been approved by the Lakehead Board of Education.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Please answer each question as instructed.
 2. All responses will be treated in strict confidence. Your responses will be seen only by the Lakehead University researchers and no information identifying respondents will be released to teachers, Board officials or others.
-

1. How often does the teacher ask you to help your child with school work?
(Circle the NUMBER next to the answer you think is best)

1. Never or hardly ever (If never or hardly ever, go directly to question 4)
2. Once or twice a month
3. Once or twice a week
4. Nearly every day
5. Don't know

2. How often have you had the time and energy to do what the teacher expected you to do?
(Circle the number)

1. Never or hardly ever
2. Some of the time
3. About half the time
4. Most of the time
5. Nearly always

3. About how many minutes of your time did it take to help your child on an average night?
(Circle one number)

MINUTES OF MY TIME: 5 10 15 20 30 40 50 1 hour

4. Please complete these sentences by indicating the response which best describes how you help your child with school work. (Circle ONE response for each sentence)

A) When I help my child at home with reading or math, I mainly use.....

- 1 Ideas and things I think of myself.
- 2 ideas and things the teacher gives me to do.
- 3 I do not help with reading or math.

B) If my child does not understand how to do some math homework, I am more likely to say...

- 1 "You'd better ask your teacher about it tomorrow."
- 2 "Let's sit down and figure it out."

5. Some teachers ask parents to help with learning activities at home. Some teachers do not. How often does your child's teacher ask you to do each of these things? For each activity, circle one of these three codes:

NEVER means the teacher does not ask me to do this at all.
 OCCASIONALLY means that the teacher asks me to do this but not on a regular basis.
 OFTEN means that the teacher asks that I do this often.
 (CIRCLE ONE CODE FOR EACH QUESTION)

- | | | | |
|---|-------|--------------|-------|
| A) Take your child to the library: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| B) Watch a TV show with your child and talk about it later: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| C) Play games with your child that help the child learn things: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| D) Ask your child about his/her school day: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| E) Make a formal "contract" with the child's teacher to supervise the child's homework or projects: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| F) Borrow books from the teacher to give your child extra help: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| G) Use things at home to teach your child: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| H) Read aloud to your child or listen to your child read: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| I) Give your child practice spelling or math drills: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| J) Plan lessons and teach your child basic skills: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| K) Agree to give rewards for good performance and behaviour. | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |
| L) Visit the classroom to watch how the child is taught: | NEVER | OCCASIONALLY | OFTEN |

6. We would like your opinion of the effectiveness of the home learning techniques mentioned in the last question. For each of the techniques listed below, circle the response which best describes your opinion.

Techniques	Your Opinion		
A. Watch and discuss TV shows with your child.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
B. Ask your child about his/her school day.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
C. Make a "contract" with the teacher to supervise your child's homework.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
D. Use things at home to teach your child.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
E. Drill math or spelling with your child.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
F. Play learning games with your child.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
G. Read to your child or have your child read to you.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
H. Visit the classroom to see how your child is taught.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
I. Agree to give rewards for good performance and behaviour.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
J. Take your child to the library.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
K. Borrow books or materials from the teacher.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective
L. Plan lessons and teach your child.	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective

7. How much time would you be willing to spend working with your child at home if the teacher showed you what to do? (Circle your best estimate of the time)

Minutes I could spend: 5 10 15 20 30 40 50 1 hour

8. The next few questions ask how parents feel about teaching and learning. For each statement below, circle the ONE response which best describes YOUR opinion.

- | | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|----------|
| A) I would like to talk more often to the teacher to learn more about my child's program. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| B) I understand more this year than I did last year about what my child is being taught in school. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| C) The school my child attends is generally well run. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| D) I don't feel I've had enough training to help my child with reading or math problems. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| E) This teacher works hard at getting parents interested and excited about helping at home. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| F) My child often gets tense or upset when we work together on school work at home. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| G) This year, more than any other year, the teacher seems to ask parents to help at home. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| H) My child likes to discuss homework or other school work with me. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| I) This teacher knows how my child's learning needs differ from those of other children. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| J) I feel responsible if my child does his/ her homework poorly. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| K) Teachers should NOT try to involve parents with home activities. Education is the school's business and not the community's problem. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| L) If this teacher ran into me while shopping, she/he would know which child's parent I was. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| M) Most of the time, homework is just "busywork" and is not much use for my child | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| N) I am uncomfortable spending time at my child's school--I feel out of place there. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |
| O) The teacher and I have different goals for my child. | Agree | Agree somewhat | Disagree |

9. What words best describe your contacts with this teacher?
(Circle the numbers of ALL the words that apply.)

- 1 "cooperation"
- 2 "conflict"
- 3 "friendliness"
- 4 "misunderstanding"
- 5 "distance"
- 6 "respect"
- 7 "lack of concern"
- 8 "tenseness"
- 9 "trust"
- 10 "warmth"

10. When I talk with the teacher, we talk mostly about....
(Circle ONE or TWO numbers from the list below.)

- 1 my child's behaviour
- 2 classroom work
- 3 my child's report card
- 4 homework
- 5 activities I could help with at home
- 6 other things (please describe:) _____
- 7 I do not talk with the teacher.

11. Some parents are able to spend time at school during the day while others cannot.
Have you been able to spend any time at your child's school in any of the ways mentioned below?
(Circle "no" or "yes" for each item. If "yes," write in about how many days per month you have been able to do this.)

- A) Helped teacher in the classroom or on class trips: NO YES..... on _____ days
- B) Helped in library, playground or office: NO YES..... on _____ days
- C) Did fund raising for the school: NO YES..... on _____ days
- D) Other (describe) _____

IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO ALL FOUR (A, B, C, & D), PLEASE GO ON TO QUESTION 13.

12. How did you happen to get involved in this activity? (Circle the number for the best choice).

- 1 Teacher asked me.
- 2 School principal or other staff member asked me.
- 3 Another parent asked me.
- 4 I asked if I could do this.

IF YOU WERE ACTIVE IN THIS SCHOOL, SKIP TO QUESTION 14.

13. What are the major reasons you do not spend time at your child's school?
(Circle the numbers for ALL the MAJOR reasons.)

- 1 I work during school hours.
- 2 I have no way to get to school.
- 3 I have small children at home or others needing care.
- 4 I am not interested in doing these things.
- 5 No one asked me.
- 6 I have special family problems.
- 7 I have other activities keeping me busy.

14. On the average, how often does someone in the family have some time to read with your child?
(Circle ONE letter.)

- A rarely or never read together
- B one or two days each week
- C three or four days each week
- D read together almost every day

15. How much schooling do you think your child will complete? (Circle one.)

- 1 graduate from high school
- 2 attend college or university
- 3 graduate from college or university
- 4 attain a professional degree beyond university

16. Who is filling out the questionnaire?

- 1 Mother or step-mother of this child
- 2 Father or step-father of this child
- 3 Other adult

17. A) How much schooling did you complete?

- 1 elementary school
- 2 some high school
- 3 graduated high school
- 4 some college or university
- 5 graduated college or university
- 6 other (please describe): _____

B) How much schooling did the child's other parent complete?

- 1 elementary school
- 2 some high school
- 3 graduated high school
- 4 some college or university
- 5 graduated college or university
- 6 other (please describe): _____

18. A) If employed, what is your current occupation? Please be specific. For example, write "shoe salesman" instead of just "salesman", or write "electrical engineer" instead of "engineer", and so forth. Tell as precisely as you can what you do. For example: "bulldozer operator", "operates a lathe", etc.

B) What is the occupation of the child's other parent?

19. A) Of all the things teachers have ever asked you to do at home with your children, which have been the most satisfying to you and your children? Describe one which you remember.

1. ACTIVITY (Describe briefly):
2. WHAT GRADE WAS YOUR CHILD IN AT THE TIME?
3. WHY DID YOU LIKE IT?

B) What is the most unsatisfying activity you have ever been asked to do by any of your children's teachers? Describe one which you remember.

1. ACTIVITY:
2. WHAT GRADE WAS YOUR CHILD IN AT THE TIME?
3. WHAT DIDN'T YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

That completes the specific questions in this questionnaire. We appreciate very much your taking the time to help us better understand the role of home learning activities for your children.

This last part of the questionnaire is optional. If you wish, please use this space to tell us more about any experiences with home learning activities which you would like to discuss. Feel free to describe these in detail so that we can better analyse the problems that parents and teachers face when children do school work at home.

In addition, if you have any opinions or ideas about parent involvement in teaching activities at home, please discuss them as fully as you wish.

APPENDIX B

Dear Parents,

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. I would like to know how you help your child learn at home and how you feel about working with teachers to educate your child. Your experiences and opinions about home learning are vitally important to our understanding of your role in educating your child.

Please complete the questionnaire and mail it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to Lakehead University. Please answer the questions only about the child who brings home the questionnaire. Do not return the questionnaire to your child's school. Your name is not required and your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. If you have any questions about the questionnaire, or would like to clarify any of the questions asked, you may call me at the address given below.

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your help is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Faculty of Education

Lakehead University

Telephone: 345-2121, Ext. 706

APPENDIX C
PARENT INVOLVEMENT:
A SURVEY OF TEACHERS' PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This questionnaire has been approved by the Lakehead Board of Education. All responses will be treated confidentially by the researcher. The identity of the respondents and the school will not be disclosed.

1. In order to better understand what you will tell us about your experiences with parents, we need to know a few things about your current teaching responsibilities.

- A) In your school, which of these statements better describes your teaching situation?
 (Check one).

- I teach a single classroom for a full day.
 I teach children from different classrooms at different times.

- B) Altogether, how many children in each grade level do you teach during a week?
 Include all children you normally teach in any subject, even if it is just a few hours a week.

GRADE LEVEL	NO. OF CHILDREN
JK	_____
SK	_____
1ST	_____
2ND	_____
3RD	_____
4TH or higher	_____

2. CONTACTS WITH PARENTS

Teachers and parents make contact in a variety of situations. Please indicate how frequently you have been or will be engaged in the following activities this year.
 (For each activity, circle one response.)

- | | | |
|--|------------|--------------|
| A. Send school and administrative notices home.. | frequently | infrequently |
| B. Meet parents at open house. | frequently | infrequently |
| C. Ask parents to sign school papers or homework.. | frequently | infrequently |
| D. Include parents on field trips or class parties.. | frequently | infrequently |
| E. Speak with parents when they come to pick up or drop off their child.. | frequently | infrequently |
| F. Speak with parent volunteers who work in the school.. | frequently | infrequently |
| G. Write to parents about your teaching program.. | frequently | infrequently |
| H. Hold private conferences with individual parents.. | frequently | infrequently |
| I. Conduct workshops or group meetings with parents (apart from school-wide "parent nights").. | frequently | infrequently |

3. Below is a list of topics that teachers might or might not discuss with parents. For each of these topics, circle the response that best reflects how you approach the topic. The choices are defined more fully below.

ROUTINELY means the topic is discussed with each parent (either in a group or individually).

AS NEED ARISES means the topic is discussed if the need arises.

NEVER means the topic is never discussed with parents except under special circumstances.

(Circle one choice for each topic.)

TOPICS

A	How you teach reading and math in the classroom	routinely	as need arises	never
B	How the children spend each part of the day	routinely	as need arises	never
C	How you discipline the children and under what circumstances	routinely	as need arises	never
D	The academic strengths and weaknesses of the child	routinely	as need arises	never
E	How well the child is behaving in the classroom	routinely	as need arises	never
F	Goals for reading and/or math for the child	routinely	as need arises	never
G	What you feel parents could be doing at home in regard to their child's school program.	routinely	as need arises	never

Please add any further comments you wish to make in the space below or on the back of the questionnaire.

4. PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Different teachers use different strategies and programs to help children learn. Most teachers find the style that works best for them in their situation. From the next few questions, we want to learn more about certain techniques that some teachers use--those that relate to parent involvement at home.

It may be that only a few teachers use these techniques, and no one is sure how successful they are. But it is important to know what teachers have learned about them and how widely they are used.

For each parent involvement technique listed below and on the next page, indicate if you have ever tried to use the technique, and how often. (The short titles in parentheses are for your reference in answering question five.) To simplify your task, just circle one of the three categories for each technique:

Never used ---means you have not used this method as a teacher.

A few times---means you use this technique a few times during a school year.

Many times---means you use this technique frequently during a school year.

(Circle one answer for each technique.)

TECHNIQUES	HOW OFTEN USED?		
	never used	a few times	many times
A. Ask parents to watch a specific television program with their child and to discuss the show afterwards. (Family: watch and discuss TV show)	never used	a few times	many times
B. Give an assignment that requires the children to ask their parents questions--for example, that the children write about their parents' experiences. (Child: ask parents questions)	never used	a few times	many times
C. Ask parents to read to their child regularly or to listen to the child read aloud. (Parents: read to child or be read to)	never used	a few times	many times
D. Send home suggestions for games or group activities related to the child's school work that can be played by parent and child.	never used	a few times	many times
E. Ask parents to take the child to the library. (Parents: take child to the library)	never used	a few times	many times
F. Ask parents to come and observe the classroom (not to help) for part of a day. (Parents: observe classroom)	never used	a few times	many times
G. Establish a formal agreement where the parent supervises and assists the child in completing homework tasks. (Parents: contract to supervise and assist)	never used	a few times	many times

(continued on next page)

TECHNIQUES	HOW OFTEN USED?		
	never used	a few times	many times
H. Establish a formal agreement where the parent provides rewards and/or penalties based on the child's school performance or behaviour. (Parents: contract to give rewards, penalties)	never used	a few times	many times
I. Ask parents to get their child to talk about what he/she did that day in the classroom. (Parents: ask child about school)	never used	a few times	many times
J. Suggest how parents might use the home environment to stimulate their child's interest in reading, math, etc. (Parents: use home environment to stimulate)	never used	a few times	many times
K. Loan books to a parent to keep at home for short periods as extra learning material. (Parents: use books on loan)	never used	a few times	many times
L. Give a questionnaire to parents so they can evaluate child's progress, or provide some other feedback to you. (Parents: fill out evaluation form)	never used	a few times	many times
M. Explain to parents certain techniques for teaching, for making learning materials, or for planning lessons. (Parents: learn teaching techniques)	never used	a few times	many times

OTHERS: Please list and briefly describe any other activities for parent involvement at home that you have tried, and how frequently you have used them.

The professional judgements of classroom teachers are very valuable in educational research--and all too often overlooked. In the next four questions, please state your opinions of the various parent involvement techniques we have just mentioned, regardless of whether you have used them in your practice.

The techniques are referred to by the short title, as given in question number 4.

5. Please give your professional judgement of each of the techniques by indicating, firstly, whether you consider it effective or not and, secondly, if you think parents are likely to cooperate in its application.

(For each technique, check one box under each heading.)

<u>Techniques</u>	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Parental Cooperation</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
A. Family: watch and discuss TV show	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Child: ask parents questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Parents: read to child or be read to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Parents: incorporate children in own activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Family: play learning games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Parents: take child to library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Parents: observe classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. Parents: contract to supervise and assist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Parents: contract to give awards,penalties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Parents: ask child about school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Parents: use home environment to stimulate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L. Parents: use books or materials on loan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M. Parents: fill out evaluation form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N. Parents: learn teaching techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OTHERS:				
#1_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#2_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#3_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Which parent technique that you have used in your classroom has been the most effective? (If you have not used any of the previously listed techniques, which do you believe has greatest potential for helping children?)
 Write its "short title" or give a brief description of what you have been doing. Indicate how the technique is received by parents and the aspect of your program (eg. social skills, reading, math or environmental studies) the technique is intended to reinforce. Use the back of the page if necessary.

MOST EFFECTIVE PARENT TECHNIQUE:

7. Please indicate your opinions on the statements given below.
 (For each statement, circle the one choice that best represents your opinion.)

A. Teachers can only provide parents with ideas about how to help their children's school work--teachers cannot influence parents to use these ideas.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
B. Most parents would rather be asked to help their children with arts and crafts activities than to help with reading and math.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
C. It is unrealistic to ask parents to spend a full hour per day working with their children on basic skills or academic achievement.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
D. Many parents want more information sent home about the curriculum than most teachers provide.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
E. Many parents seem to be uncomfortable spending time at the school--they seem to feel out of place here.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
F. If parents regularly spend time in the classroom, they usually make a greater effort to help their child learn at home.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
G. In this community, parents devote a great deal of their time to their families and often sacrifice their own personal interests for their children.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
H. Most parents--though they can teach their children to sew or use tools or play a sport-- do not have enough training to teach their children to read or solve math problems.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree
I. In this community, parent involvement is <u>not</u> an answer to the major problems of the schools-- the schools must solve their problems on their own.	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree

8. In your opinion, do teachers make enough use of parental resources in their programs?

Yes No

If your answer is no, what do you think would help to overcome the barriers to implementing programs which include parents? (For example, appropriate teacher training, improved parental cooperation)

Finally, there are a few questions that are necessary for statistical analysis. Your responses here enable the researcher to learn more about how teachers in different circumstances perceive parent involvement.

9. For how many years have you been a teacher in public or private schools? _____ years.

10. Circle all the grade levels you have taught in your career. Then underline the grade level you have taught most often.

K . 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10-13

11. A) What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- Secondary school
- Some university
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate courses
- Post graduate degree

B) Have you taken professional courses since you began teaching?

Yes No

12. If you attended university, what was your major field?

_____Major field

13. What is your year of birth? (Check one)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1920-1924 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1940-1944 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1925-1929 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1944-1949 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1930-1934 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1950-1954 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1935-1939 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1955-1959 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 1960 or later |

14. Sex

- Female
 Male

Thank you for your assistance. The time you have taken to answer these questions is appreciated.

If you wish, please use this space to tell us more about any experiences with home learning activities which you would like to discuss. Feel free to describe these in detail so that we can better analyse the problems that parents and teachers face when children do school work at home.

In addition, if you have any opinions or ideas about parent involvement in teaching activities at home, please discuss them as fully as you wish.

APPENDIX D

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AS A TEACHING STRATEGY

Positive contact between home and school is a necessary factor in running an effective classroom program. This study will investigate questions such as how much parental involvement is practical and effective. Would some efforts interfere with family life or be unnecessary burdens on teachers?

Research generally sees parental involvement favourably, but *teachers'* experiences with parental involvement have not been extensively investigated. However, the perspectives of teachers are vitally important to our understanding of the proper role of parent involvement in educational systems.

In this study your experiences and opinions are very important, whether or not you have personally involved parents in your teaching program. This questionnaire is being given to selected teachers of grades one, two and three in the Lakehead Board of education in the city of Thunder Bay. Each returned questionnaire is valuable both for its unique perspectives and so that responses received represent primary teachers in Thunder Bay.

Please answer the questions and return the questionnaire to the researcher. Feel free to expand upon your answers using the back of the questionnaire.

All information and opinions you provide are completely confidential. Your name does not appear on the questionnaire and no teacher's responses will ever be individually identified. No school will be publicly identified.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and your efforts.

Sincerely yours,



APPENDIX E

TELEPHONE 345 2121

AREA CODE 807

**Lakehead University**

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, CANADA, POSTAL CODE P7B 5E1

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 6th, 1986.

Ms. Sondra Archibald,
Faculty of Education,
Lakehead University,
THUNDER BAY, Ontario.
P7B 5E1

Dear Ms. Archibald:

Based on the recommendation of the Ethics Sub-Committee, the Senate Research Committee has agreed to recommend that your research proposal entitled "The Effectiveness of Parental Involvement as a Teaching Strategy: A student of parents and teachers in Thunder Bay" be given ethical approval.

I am pleased to comply with this recommendation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bob Rosehart".

ROBERT G. ROSEHART,

President.

/lp

cc - J. Parnell
R. Mauro

APPENDIX F



Lakehead University

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, CANADA, POSTAL CODE P7B 5E1

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

November 7, 1986

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck
Planning Department
Lakehead Board of Education
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Re: Study of Parental Involvement as a Teaching Strategy

Dear Ms. Woodbeck:

This study is being conducted to investigate the attitudes and practices of parents and teachers with respect to home learning activities for children. It is intended that the findings of the study will help in promoting greater involvement by and communications between parents and teachers, and in enhancing the child's overall educational experience. The study will be the basis for my Master of Education thesis at Lakehead University.

I am submitting for the Board's approval copies of the questionnaires and explanatory material for both parents and teachers. The questionnaires will be administered to primary teachers and parents of primary grade children in the City of Thunder Bay. Completion of the questionnaires will be voluntary and all responses will be treated with the strictest confidence. Respondents will be anonymous and no individual or school will be identifiable in the published findings. The research proposal has been approved by the Ethics Subcommittee of the Lakehead University Senate Research Committee and a copy of Dr. Rosehart's letter indicating this approval is attached.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sondra A. Archibald".

Sondra A. Archibald
Sessional Lecturer



APPENDIX G

MEMORANDUM

TO: Principals of Selected Schools
(See Distribution Below)

FROM: Cathy Woodbeck
Planning and Secondary Education

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT

DATE: Nov. 19, 1986.

A research project entitled "The Effectiveness of Parental Involvement as a Teaching Strategy: A study of parents and teachers in Thunder Bay" has been approved by Jackie Dojack, Superintendent responsible for research. This study is being carried out by Sondra Archibald and will form the basis for her Master of Education thesis at Lakehead University.

Sandra has been advised that final approval for participation rests with the principal of each school. She will be contacting you shortly.

A copy of the application form and relevant information is attached. Thank you.

Encl.

Distribution

Queen Elizabeth
Five Mile
Whitefish Valley
Grandview
C.D. Howe
Westmount
Vickers Heights

Vance Chapman
Kakabeka Falls
Ogden
Prospect
Oliver Road
Blake Central
Sir John A. MacDonald

Redwood

cc: *Sondra Archibald*

APPENDIX H

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A TEACHING STRATEGY: A STUDY OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN THUNDER BAY

Thesis Outline

One cause of the criticism which has recently been directed at schools and school systems is that schools have become isolated from other educational institutions such as the church and the home. The educational process which takes place in the home is often not linked with education in the schools. In fact, there is frequently little meaningful communication between home and school. The resulting lack of instructional coordination produces a gap between educational efforts at home and at school. This gap is detrimental to the child's adjustment to the school setting and also to the child's academic progress.

Parental involvement in teachers' programs is a means of combining the educational efforts of the home and the school. This study will investigate the feasibility of the use of parents as a teaching strategy in the programs of teachers. The investigation will determine home learning activities that are considered to be effective by both parents and teachers. The learning activities approved would indicate the kinds of activities that both groups would support and be comfortable in implementing and are, therefore, most likely to be used. The study will also investigate the attitudes of parents and teachers toward the use of parental involvement as a teaching strategy.

This study extends work done by Henry Becker and Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In 1982 they conducted a survey in the state of Maryland to determine parent and teacher attitudes toward parental involvement in home instruction. The present study is modelled on the Becker-Epstein work but will be on a smaller scale and will be

conducted in the city of Thunder Bay. Permission to carry out the survey will be obtained from the Lakehead Board of Education.

The study group will consist of approximately 30 teachers of grades one, two and three and the parents of children in those grades. Questionnaires will be distributed to both parents and teachers. Copies of the questionnaires are attached to this submission. The completion of the questionnaires is voluntary and all data obtained will be confidential. Only grouped data and unattributed and unidentifiable comments will be included in published work.

Analysis of the data collected will identify effective learning activities and determine attitudes of parents and teachers toward home involvement in school programs. From this analysis, recommendations for more effective home learning programs will be developed. Information obtained will contribute to more meaningful parent information programs and teacher training and professional development programs.

APPENDIX I

Test for Differences Between Proportions of Parents' and Teachers' Opinions About Home Activities Using Normal Approximations

The test statistic is as follows:

$$Z \cong \frac{P_{S1} - P_{S2}}{\sqrt{\bar{p}(1-\bar{p}) \left\{ \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right\}}}$$

The null hypothesis assumes that parents and teachers hold equal opinions.

$$H_0: p_{S1} = p_{S2} \quad \text{Reject } H_0: \text{ if } Z > +1.645 \quad \text{or if } Z < -1.645$$

Activity	Calculated Z value	Significant or not significant at the 10% level
Parents read to child or have child read	.854	not significant
Use home environment to teach child	-.264	not significant
Parents learn how to teach child	4.11	significant
Play learning games with child	.92	not significant
Ask child about the school day	.618	not significant
Watch and discuss TV shows	1.118	not significant
Take child to the library	1.752	significant
Borrow materials from the teacher	1.834	significant
Parents visit and observe the classroom	-.148	not significant
Parents contract to supervise and assist	1.189	not significant
Parents agree to give awards for good performance and behaviour	.978	not significant

APPENDIX JTests for Differences Between Means

* All tests at 10% level of significance (Z = 1.65)

Low - Medium SES Comparison

Standard error of difference between means = 3.05

$$1.65^* \times 3.05 = 5.02$$

Difference between means = 5.83 (> 5.02)

Difference is significant @ 10% level.

Medium - High SES Comparison

Standard error of difference between means = 3.07

$$1.65^* \times 3.07 = 5.05$$

Difference between means = 1.04 (< 5.05)

Difference is not significant @ 10% level.

Low - High SES Comparison

Standard error of difference between means = 2.59

$$1.65^* \times 2.59 = 4.26$$

Difference between means = 4.79 (> 4.26)

Difference is significant @ 10% level.