

A CASE STUDY OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL USING THE
ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS TO STUDY PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

by

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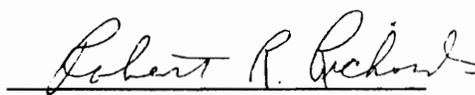
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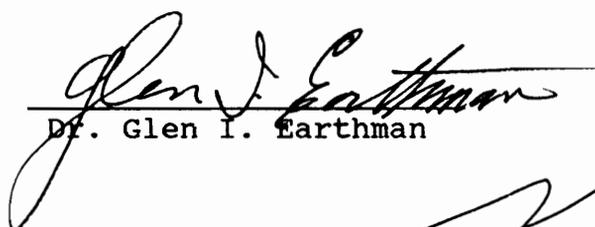
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(ABSTRACT)

This study was designed to examine team interaction as a team utilized the action research process. The research questions that were investigated in this study are:

1. How do working relationships evolve in action research teams?
2. What is the role of the principal as facilitator?
3. What do team members perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of the action research process?

This study specifically investigated the interactive roles of an action research team composed of parents, teachers and the administrator as they used the action research process to study parental involvement. The research project was designed as a case study of one school. Qualitative data were collected from tape recordings of meetings, journal records, interviews, and questionnaires. Quantitative data were secured from a survey completed by team participants on team effectiveness.

This study provides additional research on how a team consisting of parents, teachers and a principal interacted and worked to solve a problem. The study showed the

development of the capacity of a team to solve a problem using the action research process. The primary significance of this study was to learn how action research might be used as an approach to develop and implement strategies to enhance the involvement of parents in their child's education. Utilizing the action research model in Crewe Primary school allowed team members (parents and teachers) the opportunity to learn this approach and apply it to other areas requiring improvements. This study will also provide a model for other schools interested in utilizing action research.

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I expressly want to thank God for the opportunity to achieve.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Jesse Reynolds, Jr., whose love (life) helped to direct my future.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of providing a high quality education for all children involves all stakeholders. Parents and teachers working together can discover solutions to problems affecting their school. One process that allows stakeholders to investigate issues, develop a plan of action and implement strategies is "action research. "Action research, is conducted by people who want to do something to improve their own situation" (Sagor, 1992, p. 7). This study will focus on one school's experience in using action research as a procedure for change.

Action research constitutes a process for change or restructuring. Ebutt (1985) defines action research as the "systematic study of attempts to change and improve educational practice by groups of participants by means of their own personal actions and by their reflection upon the effects of those actions" (p.156). McKerman (1988) reports that "action research can be used to increase our understanding of problems through an on-the-site inquiry aimed at problem resolution (cited in Berlin & White, 1993). Calhoun (1994) defines action research as "disciplined inquiry (research) in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of the organization and its performance (action)" (p. 5). Action research changes beliefs after study, planning and the implementation of strategies.

Action research may be executed by an individual teacher, a collaborative group or the entire school staff (Calhoun, 1994). A collaborative action research approach was used in this study. A team, consisting of parents, teachers and the principal was organized to study how they may be a catalyst to improve parental involvement at Crewe Primary School.

The importance of parental involvement in the education of children has received much attention in recent years. Fourteen years ago, Terrel Bell, then Secretary of Education, established the "National Commission on Excellence in Education," to assess the quality of education in the United States. The commission's report, A Nation at Risk, alerted the public to the importance of "Parents as a child's first teacher." Goal 8, of Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994, encourages schools to develop strong school and family partnerships. "Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title I: Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards, Section 1118: Parental Involvement," mandates increased parental involvement in schools receiving Title I funds (Macfarlane, 1995). Nationally, legislative efforts recognize parental involvement in a child's education as a critical link to achieving a high quality education.

Research indicates a positive link between parent involvement and student success (Comer, 1980; Henderson, 1981, 1987; Reynolds, 1992; Moles, 1993; Clark, 1993; H Davies, 1996; and Epstein, 1991, 1996). Epstein (1987) contends that there is consistent evidence that parents' interest and participation in school along with providing

encouragement and support for home activities regardless of the family's socio-economic status, effects students' achievement. Additional benefits of parent-school partnerships are more positive attitudes and behavior expressed by students and more consistent school attendance (McFarland, 1995).

A coordinated partnership between home and school can produce an atmosphere of continued educational support (Johnson, 1990; Epstein, 1996). Effective schools require the participation and involvement of parents. The question is "Why aren't more parents active supporters of their child's learning or active participants in their child's school?" Parents do care about their child's education (Abott et al., 1989). Research suggests there are barriers inhibiting parents from becoming more involved in their child's schooling (Epstein and Becker, 1982; Henderson, 1987; Hamilton and Osborne, 1994; Connors and Epstein, 1994; and Herman, 1995).

In establishing the relationship between school and parents it is necessary to be aware of the barriers that make parental involvement difficult. Barriers include: time, insecurity about what to do and poor self-concept, a non-supportive environment, cultural diversity and language barriers (Riley, 1994). Barriers must be overcome to establish an effective home-school partnership.

Young & Helvie (1996) link an effective home school environment as essential in nurturing educational success. They identify "direct" and "indirect" practices of parent

participation. Direct involvement "reflects a high degree of visible participation with the school, such as parents attending school functions and meetings, and discussing with school officials the child's educational plans and progress," (Young & Helvie, 1996, p. 181). Epstein (1995) identifies direct involvement to include parent participation in workshops, P.T.A., conferences, volunteer programs and school activities.

Young & Helvie (1996) state that "indirect involvement" manifests itself through "parents" positive beliefs and attitudes about school. When parents speak well of the importance of school, children perceive school as a place they would like to attend. Indirect involvement, such as parental guidance with homework activities, provide students with positive attitudes about the home-school connection.

Parents, teachers and administrators working together can develop and implement strategies to achieve an increase in parental involvement in a school (Moore, 1991). This increase will not just happen. It must be "initiated and nurtured by all stakeholders," (Piper, 1993, p. 302 ; Young and Helvie, 1996, p. 181).

One strategy of change is the organization of an action team within a school. Change is essential for empowerment, collaboration and problem solving. Schools can create a problem solving team or "Action Research Team," composed of parents, teachers and the administrator. Regardless of the name, the team, has the task of collecting information about a school concern, analyzing and interpreting the data, developing and implementing strategies, and evaluating the results.

Statement of the Problem

As the education process becomes increasingly difficult, all stakeholders must work together to solve problems unique to their schools. Teams incorporating a collaborative approach is one such technique affording parents, teachers and administrators the opportunity to make a difference in schools. It was the problem of this study to examine team interaction as participants utilize the action research process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to observe a team's interpersonal relations, study the principal's role and describe the team's perception of the action research process. This study investigated the interaction and role of an action research team composed of parents, teachers and the administrator as they use the action research process to study parental involvement.

Research Questions

The research questions that were investigated in this study are:

1. How do working relationships evolve in action research teams?
2. What is the role of the principal as facilitator?
3. What do team members perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of the action research process?

Definition of Terms

Several terms pertinent to this study are identified to assist the reader.

Action team— A group of individuals (parents, teachers and the principal) working together to solve a problem constitute an action team.

Action research -- in this study, action research defines the process for initiating change designed to improve educational practices by parents, teachers, students, and the administrators to obtain a desirable outcome. The Johnson Action Research Model includes the following steps:

1. Orientation to the Action Research Process - (Incorporate Team Building Strategies)
2. Identification of a Focus Area
3. Investigation of the Researched Literature
4. Determination of Data Needed and Development of Data Collection Instruments
5. Aggregation of Data
6. Organization, Analysis and Interpretation of Data
7. Formation of Action Plan and Implementation of Strategies
8. Evaluation, Reflection and Celebration of Strategies and Accomplishments

Facilitator--The principal of the school served as the facilitator. Her role was to train participants on the action research process, give encouragement and provide support to teammates.

Non-participant-observer--A teacher in the school served as the non-participant observer. Her role was to script the working relationship of team members and the facilitator as they worked through the action research process.

Interpersonal relations--Skills such as listening, cooperation, collaboration, respect, trust, communication, commitment and consensus attainment are characteristic of interpersonal relations.

Involved Parents --The caregivers who participate in the student's educational career and school were considered involved parents.

Primary school -- Grades Pre-K through Second for the purpose of this study constitute a primary school.

Barriers -- Behaviors or conditions that inhibit parental involvement are identified as barriers. Barriers include time, uncertainty about what to do, poor self-concept, non-supportive environment, cultural diversity and language barriers.

Parent involvement practices --Six types of involvement for students, parents and teachers are identified as parent involvement practices. Epstein (1995) defines each category with the following explanations:

- . participation in workshops -- meetings on specific topics at the school site, to provide information to parents.
- . communicating -- communications about school issues, functions and student progress through notices, success reports and report cards.
- . volunteering -- parents and community persons who actively support school goals and/or tutor children on the school site.
- . learning at home -- homework, work done independently or school activities shared with family members.
- . decision making --attendance at and participation in PTA meetings and events.
- . community involvement--Businesses and schools in collaborative partnerships.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in that the data were collected, organized, analyzed and interpreted by persons on the school site. Data on parents were self-reported by parents who have children attending the primary school. The role of the principal as facilitator and researcher may have influences on the outcomes of the process. Additionally, research involved one rural primary school in Virginia. The ability to generalize to other schools was limited.

Significance of the Study

This study described how a group of individuals, parents, teachers, and the principal used a collaborative action research approach design to study and implement strategies for greater parental involvement. This study provided additional research on how a team consisting of parents, teachers, and a principal interacted and worked to solve a problem. It also demonstrated the development of the capacity of a team to solve a problem using the action research process.

Action research is a research method that provided those close to a situation or problem the opportunity to work through various systematic steps to achieve a desired outcome. This study provided additional research on how action research might be used by a team to study parental involvement practices in an attempt to take actions to improve previous practices.

Utilizing the action research model in the school allowed team members (parents and teachers) the opportunity to learn this approach, utilize the process to solve school issues and apply the process to other areas requiring improvements. This study also provided a model for other schools.

Organization of the Chapters

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I includes the introduction, problem statement, purpose, research questions, definition of terms, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter II provides an overview of related literature. Chapter III contains a description of the subjects, describes the methodological process and procedure, discusses data collection instruments and the analyses used for the investigation. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analyses. Chapter V presents the summation, conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a review of literature on parental involvement. Parental involvement is the identified area for study by the action team. The second section provides an examination of the literature on action research. Action research is the process used by the team to study parental involvement practices.

Several studies support the belief that there is a positive link between parental involvement and student success (Henderson, 1987). The positive effects can be identified as improved cognitive performance, improved student behavior, improved student attitudes about school and improved home-school relations (Kagan, 1984). Parents and teachers must work together for student success.

Definitions of Parental Involvement

Parent involvement has been defined as parents assisting their children with homework activities (Epstein & Becker, 1982), participating on school committees or boards, volunteering, communicating with teachers and attending school activities (Epstein, 1996). Parent involvement is parents taking an interest in their child's academic and social well-being (Keith et al, 1986), or a parent's educational aspirations for their child (Seginer, 1983).

Rationale for Parent Involvement

Parental involvement in a child's education is very fundamental to a child's achieving a quality education. Research indicates that parental involvement in a child's education is essential in achieving academic success and securing a safe learning environment, (Riley, 1994).

The document "Strong Families, Strong Schools," published by the U.S. Department of Education (1994), makes the point that parents have the greatest authority over the following factors which influence student achievement: student absenteeism, selection of reading materials in the home and excessive television watching. Parents exercising control of the above factors have a positive impact on student achievement. "When parents are involved in their children's education, children do better in school and go to better schools," (Henderson, 1987, p.5). Children develop positive attitudes conducive to learning and schools benefit from the human and financial resources established by the school-home partnership. Effective schools view school-parent partnership as essential in sustaining student success and in achieving quality schools.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parents benefit from involvement in schools. Many parents participating in parent-involvement programs develop a sense of self-worth. They develop a better interest in

their child and their child's school. Parents learn helpful ideas to assist their child and learn more about the total school system (Davies, 1996).

Teachers and schools benefit from home-school partnerships. Teachers gain a better comprehension of the children they are teaching and understand the value of parental assistance in the home to students (McFarland, 1995). Home-school partnerships have the potential of changing the climate of the school. All stakeholders benefit from this educational enterprise.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

The U.S. Department of Education (1994) identified five inhibitors of parental involvement in schools. The barriers are: time, cultural and language diversity, insecurity about what to do, poor self-concept and a non-supportive environment.

Time

Time is a factor that affects both parents and teachers in schools. The publication, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," (1994), points out that two-thirds of employed parents with children under the age of 18 reported that they do not have sufficient time to give their children. Time is limited for working parents because of other family responsibilities and obligations. Parents desiring to attend school functions have difficulty scheduling between events, home obligations and peripheral responsibilities.

Teachers are also pressed for time (Epstein and Becker, 1982). Their agenda involves planning for schoolwork and balancing home responsibilities, especially if they are parents. The time factor brings similar concerns from parents and teachers.

Cultural and Language Diversity

Cultural and language diversity may prevent parents from fully participating in their child's school. Families may feel that their cultural strengths are not recognized by the school (Neuman & Roskos, 1994; Hamilton and Osborne, 1994; and Voltz, 1994). Immigrant parents encountering extreme difficulty understanding the English language experience difficulty in school programs. Children also find difficulty adjusting to the culture at school and the culture at home (Liontos, 1992). A language barrier produces limited contact by teachers and parents. Sara Lightfoot (1978) notes that when children are exposed to two cultures they embrace the one that is the most familiar, usually the home culture. A cultural and language barrier between school and home can produce a situation in which the definitive loser is the child.

Insecurity about what to do and poor self-concept

Parents with bad memories about school or who experienced academic difficulties in various curriculum areas may be reluctant to help their children with home learning activities or participate in on-site school activities. Parents with a poor self-concept may

feel uncomfortable in assisting their children and in seeking direction from the teacher (Wolfendale, 1989). Fear of failure becomes an inhibiting factor to parent-school involvement.

Non-supportive environment

Parents living in poverty are usually in an environment in which they are seeking day to day survival. Food, shelter, health and safety are prioritized higher in most instances than school (Epstein 1990). Survival not involvement comprise their day (Hranitz and Eddowes, 1987).

Strong family ties can have a negative influence on parent involvement (Hamilton & Osborne, 1994, p.149). According to Hamilton and Osborne, dissolving the patterns of non support or inactive involvement may be difficult in families that do not value education. Family ties can affect one's opinions about school.

Perceptions about Parent Involvement

Parents care about their children learning, but may perceive "the classroom as the teachers domain, a place where they shouldn't interfere," (Black, 1993, p. 30). This perception is because schools and teachers have traditionally been recognized as being primarily responsible for education (Young & Helvie, 1996).

Teachers and administrators lacking knowledge about how to involve parents in their youngsters education is a significant barrier (Black, 1993). Black suggests that teachers and administrators must first become aware of appropriate interventions and strategies for working with parents before attempting to bridge a partnership or implementing a parent involvement program.

Components of a Parent Involvement Program

Research indicates that a home, school, community partnership can "improve school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with the school and community and assist teachers with their work, (Epstein, 1995, p. 701).

Epstein's model (1987) suggests there are overlapping systems of influence between families, children, parents, teachers and schools. The theory incorporates an external and internal model. The "external model" "recognizes that the family, the school, and the community may be drawn together or pushed apart," (Epstein, 1995, p.702). This model recognizes that practices which influence children's learning and development are conducted jointly and separately by schools, family and community (Epstein, 1995, p. 702). The "internal model" indicates where and how interpersonal relations and patterns of influence occur between individuals at home, at school and in the community (Epstein, 1995, p. 702). The relationships may occur at an institutional level, when the school sends

communications to all parents, and at an individual level, when a parent and teacher meet in conference or communicate by phone (Epstein, 1995). Students are located at the center of the model of school, family and community partnerships. Students bridge the information gap between parents and school.

Various programs and practices used throughout the country are designed to involve parents in their child's education. The program developed by Epstein identifies six levels of involvement that can be adapted and used by any school district. The levels are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community (Epstein, 1995). Each of the six levels is described below.

Parenting

The purpose of parenting workshops are to "help parents establish home environments to support children as students," (Epstein, 1995, p. 704). Information can be made available to all parents. Video taping of the workshop is a method of making information available to parents not in attendance. Workshops of interest to parents are held at a designated time at a selected site.

Communicating

The purpose of communicating is to provide a reciprocal avenue for correspondence between teachers and parents about students strengths and needs. Communications may be

in the form of progress reports, report cards, telephone calls, conferences, memos, and newsletters.

Volunteering

A volunteer is a parent or person from the community who actively supports school goals, and who assist students, teachers and administrators at the school site (Epstein, 1995). A school can design and implement an orientation workshop to acquaint volunteers with school procedures and policies, the facility, policies, school personnel and equipment. An assessment of volunteer interest and skill attainment is required to place volunteers appropriately.

Learning at Home

Homework, work done independently or school activities shared with family members constitute homework or learning at home. It is important that parents designate a place and a set time for students to complete homework. Teachers may frequently send home activities that require parental interaction or guidance.

Decision Making

Decision making refers to a participatory process whereby each person is free to share opinions and views toward an identified goal. Schools can work toward improving

the participation and leadership of parents in school governance by seeking parent input on issues effecting students. "Parents can share concerns and work to create a common educational vision" (Kilbourne, Decker and Romney, 1994, p.34). The organization of a committee or team to make decisions for the school should include a population reflective of the ethnic and socio-economic makeup of the school. The inclusion of students in the decision making process may provide students with an "awareness of representation of families in school decisions and knowledge of the benefits linked to policies implemented by parent organizations and experienced by students," (Epstein, 1995, p. 706; Radd, 1993). Most schools have an organized PTA/PTO which can provide opportunities for parents to develop or strengthen leadership skills and participate in decisions affecting their child's education, rights and well-being.

Community Collaboration

Community refers to "all persons who are interested in and affected by the quality of education" (Epstein, 1995, p. 705). The community pertains to parents and other individuals in the district. The distribution of memos sent home by students, newspaper articles in the local or state paper will provide means of collaboration between individuals of the community about school activities and events. Businesses and organizations may be contacted for sponsorship of school programs and to build collaborative partnerships.

Action Teams for Home/School Partnerships

The six types of parental involvement are essential to a home/school partnership. The question is, "Who is going to work to insure the partnership?" An "Action Team," utilizing the action research process, can be organized to develop and implement a plan to increase parental involvement in a school.

Action Research

In action research, the researcher's role is involved (Lane, 1994). According to Lane, research is joined with action in order to develop, implement and assess change. The researchers themselves become active participants who by working together can combine their knowledge and expertise to solve a problem.

Background of Action Research

The term, Action Research, was introduced in the 1940's by Kurt Lewin. Lewin introduced the term "action research in the 1940's to describe how action and investigation were needed to solve problems," (McFarland & Stansell, 1993, p.12). Lewin's idea was to analyze and interpret data to solve a problem, while simultaneously experimenting with strategies or innovations for improvement or change.

Action research was used in a number of settings from business to Native American affairs (Llorens, 1994). Action research was applied to education as early as 1926. During

the 1930's, Hollis L. Caswell, summarized his work on action research, using educators as researchers. His book, "Curriculum Development in Public School Systems, indicated that teachers were more not apt to adopt innovations without ownership (Foshay, 1994, p. 318). Stephen Corey's (1993), publication "Action Research to Improve School Practices" underscores "cooperative research," whereby teachers would participate in the decisions and implementation of strategies to solve an issue (Jenkins, 1994; Foshay, 1994). Corey inferred that the purpose of action research is "(1) a desirable goal and (2) an action for achieving the goal (cited in Jenkins, 1994, p. 470). The employment of action research declined during the 60's and 70's due to attacks on methods and procedures. Elements of action research reemerged during the 1980's under the terminology: "networking, classroom research, site-based-management, and finally, under its original name, action research" (Foshay, 1994, p.320).

Perspectives in Action Research

McCutcheon & Burga (1990) describe three perspectives in action research. The paradigms they identify are: A positive perspective, an interpretive perspective and a critical science perspective.

A positivistic action research recommends six steps for an action research model (Taba & Noel, 1957; McCutcheon & Jung, 1990). The six steps recommended by the researchers are (a) state the problem, (b) analyze the problem and identify probable

causes, (c) develop reason for causes, (d) collect and interpret data to formulate hypothesis, (e) construct an action plan, and (f) assess the results of actions implemented. Positivists develop hypothesis and collect data available on the site to solve the problem. Data collected may be in the form of test scores, questionnaires and interviews.

Interpretivists use the self-reflection component of their paradigm (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990). Interpretivists believe that people formulate beliefs or values from the situations encountered in their lives (Reason & Rowan, 1981; McCutcheon & Jung 1990). Since individual beliefs can not always be foreseen, interpretivists do not have a predetermined research design. Because of the unpredictable nature of events or circumstances of the interpretation individuals formulate from these events, the degree of questioning evolves over the course of the research.

Critical science research is seen as a combination of the three perspectives. McCutcheon & Jung (1990) define action research as a systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry. Participants are directly involved with the planning and success of the inquiry.

Action Research Models

Kemmis (1980) model identifies the following steps in a cycle: identification of a general idea, reconnaissance, general planning, developing the first action step, implementing the first action step, evaluation and a revising of the general plan.

Participants using this plan can develop, implement action steps and revise the plan when needed.

John Elliott's model focuses on "reconnaissance and implementation," which he believes should occur frequently throughout the process. Monitoring and assessing the effects are essential steps in the action research process," (Elliott, 1991, p. 70).

Calhoun's model of action research involves the following phases: "selection of an area of interest and consensus; collection, organization and interpretation of data related to the problem," (Calhoun, 1994, p.2). Participants using Calhoun's model are constantly "retracing steps" because of on-site data and new knowledge obtained from reviewed literature (Appendix A).

Traditional Research versus Action Research

Traditional research is different from action research in four ways: "sampling procedures, research design, qualifications of researchers and the criteria for assessment," (Sheldon & Allain, 1987, p. 16).

Traditional research requires a sampling population representative of the total population while action research focuses on the problem to be solved in a particular situation (Sheldon & Allain, 1987). In traditional research the research design is structured, while in action research the design is flexible. Traditional research requires the researcher to be competent in research design, sampling theory, and statistical analysis,

while in action research the researcher is concerned with finding solutions for the subjects in the study (Sheldon & Allain, 1987). Finally, traditional research is assessed by being able to generalize to other populations and situations; while action research is assessed by its "success in improving a given situation," (Sheldon & Allain, 1987). Action research allows an individual or team to plan, act, and evaluate an action with the focus of solving a problem to change a situation.

Two Forms of Action Research

Action research is usually of two forms--quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research involves the collection of facts for comparison of one set of facts to another for study (Jenkins, 1994). Qualitative research is more subjective, in that individuals record their own perceptions of occurrences. Surveys, journals, photographs, video and audio tape recordings are used by the qualitative researcher.

Quantitative action research proceeds from a hypothesis which is inflexible during the project; while qualitative action research is more flexible (Jenkins, 1994). Jenkins suggests that anticipated and unanticipated results may cause a revision in the process of the project.

Applications of Action Research

Action research may be conducted by one individual, collaboratively by a group, or as a schoolwide project. In education, one teacher may decide to examine new strategies in an area such as: curriculum and instruction, school climate, planning and management. An area or problem is identified, a plan developed and strategies identified and implemented, and results assessed (Calhoun, 1994).

Collaborative action research involves a group of individuals. Teachers or administrators work closely with university personnel or facilitator (Calhoun, 1994). Schoolwide action research involve teachers, parents, students and community leaders who may form a team to identify and solve problems. The effect is expected to improve the quality of education for all students attending the facility (Calhoun, 1994).

The Advantages and Limitations of Action Research

There are many advantages and limitations to action research. Sheldon and Allain (1987) have identified several advantages of action research. The researchers state that participants assess related research and implement effective practices. Through consensus, participants can develop a course of action to achieve the identified goal. Individuals or a group of individuals may explore action research. The membership of the team may increase at will of the group. Participants identify and solve problems in a systematic process. Individuals of any vocation, at any level, can use action research.

These advantages help to maximize the effectiveness of action research. The action research process helps to solve a problem. It also provides opportunities for participants in the process to grow mentally and socially as they work together to achieve a goal.

Sheldon and Allain (1987) have identified four limitations of action research. These limitations include: a school's climate, time, a lack of trust and a lack of methodological awareness. Action research will not be nurtured in a passive school climate. Persons effected must be part of the decision making process. They must be empowered to assess strategies implemented to achieve the goal. Time is needed for each step of the process. Participants need time to learn the process, in order to use each step proficiently. Trust is essential to the success of the team. Each member must feel he is an asset to the team. Views and concerns must be freely expressed and acknowledged. Participants must be "supportive of each other, yet provide critical feedback to make the efforts worthwhile," (Sheldon & Allain, 1987, p.28). According to Sheldon and Allain, action research has not been reported upon as frequently as traditional research, but the trend is changing. It has gained greater acclaim since school renewal and site base management.

Action Research Team

One of the positive aspects of action research is that "parents and teachers learn to work together to solve problems, make decisions that are meaningful to the children and families in the school and learn to communicate and trust each other," (Davies, 1996,

p. 21). The challenge of providing a quality education for all children involves all stakeholders. Parents and teachers working together can discover solutions to problems effecting their school. Action research may be used as an effective research process to investigate innovations to parental involvement.

SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the value of parental involvement in a child's education as essential to a child receiving and maintaining a high quality of education. Parents do care about their children, however, there are many barriers preventing the exercise of parental involvement. Barriers to parental involvement include: time constraints, cultural and language diversity, insecurity about what to do, poor self-concept and a non-supportive environment. Both students and parents benefit from parental involvement. The components of a program geared toward increasing parental involvement include: parenting workshops, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and community involvement.

The final section of this chapter highlighted action research. Action research has been defined as a procedure to change an educational practice by an individual or groups of individuals by their own efforts (Ebbutt 1995). McKerman (1988) refers to action research as an on-the-site inquiry; while Calhoun (1994) defines action research as an ordered investigation of a problem to provide solutions to increase the effectiveness of an organization.

Action research was used in education as early as 1926. During the 1980's the basic principles of action research were identified under "networking, classroom research & site-based management" (Foshay, 1994). The three perspectives of action research are: a

positive perspective, an interpretive perspective, and a critical science perspective.

Positivists develop hypothesis and collect on-site data to solve a problem. Interpretivists allow for individual beliefs and ideas to influence the design of the research. Critical science research incorporated the ideas of the positivists and interpretivists.

Action research is viewed as a systematic approach in which participants are directly involved. Action research is different from traditional research. Action research focuses on the issue to be solved in a particular situation and is flexible in its design. Traditional research requires a sampling population and is more structured in its design and approach. Action research may be quantitative and/or qualitative. Action research may be executed by one individual, a small group or by all members of an organization. The advantages of action research include: participant involvement in the development of an action plan, implementation of strategies and the assessment of outcomes. The limitations of action research include: the climate of the school, time requirements, level of trust between members, and the level of understanding of the action research process. Action research is a systematic approach stakeholders can use to study issues, develop a plan and implement strategies to help bring awareness to the benefits of parental involvement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discloses the design of the study, the setting of the study, the composition of the action team, the role of the participants and a description of the action research model. This chapter also includes a description of the qualitative analysis of data from the researcher's field notes, reflective journals of the participants and the non-participant observer, interviews of selected participants and the survey questionnaire.

Design of the Study

A case study of the action research process was conducted to investigate practices designed to increase parental involvement at Crewe Primary School. Yin (1989) states that "a case study contributes to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social and political phenomena" (p.14). The "greatest advantage of a case study is the possibility of depth and its attempts to understand the group in relation to the task (Ary, Jacobs & Razavich, 1996, p. 484). Case studies allow the researchers to explore "individual aspects of human behavior and discover unsuspected relationships (Ary, Jacobs & Razavich, 1996, p. 484). Case studies allow the researcher "to learn more about individuals in order to assist them" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavich, 1996, p. 485).

The case studied was about a primary school using action research to study parental involvement practices. The researcher used action research methodology to engage parents and teachers in a process to examine an issue. The focus of this study was on the interpersonal relationships that developed among members and how these relationships evolved over months of working as a team as members worked through the action research process.

The Setting

Crewe Primary School, a public institution located in Nottoway County in the state of Virginia was selected as the site for this study. Thirty-three teachers were employed in the school during the selected study time frame. The facility accommodated 366 students from the Crewe-Burkeville area. The student population was composed of 11 Pre-schoolers, 18 Headstart students, 30 Pre-Kindergartners, 93 Kindergartners, 106 First Graders, and 108 Second Graders. The ethnic composition was 191 African American students, 171 Caucasian students, 3 Hispanics students and 1 American Indian student. The school is located on an 11 acre site outside the eastern town limits of Crewe, Virginia.

The Action Team

The School Renewal Planning Committee of Crewe Primary School served as the Crewe Primary School Action Team for the purpose of this study. The Action Research Team consisted of six teachers, six parents, the principal who served as the facilitator and

a teacher who served as a non-participant observer. Parents and teachers participating in this study were representative from the following grades or departments: Pre-kindergarten, Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, Special Education, and the Title I School Program.

The principal of the school served as the team facilitator. Some models have advocated the use of an outside facilitator, however in a rural community with limited resources, it may not be feasible to employ an outside facilitator. As a team member and facilitator, the principal, observed and participated in the team activities.

A non-participant observer served as an independent monitor of the action research team. The non-participant observer was employed as a teacher in the school. She was knowledgeable of the role of the facilitator and other team members during the participatory approach to decision making.

Role of Participants

The primary role of the team participants were to work as a team to solve a problem. Participants included: the facilitator, the team members and the non-participant observer. The facilitator's duties included instructing the team on the fundamentals of the action research process; providing support to the action team by: assisting in the scheduling of meetings and the formation of the agenda; collaborating with the team to encourage the development of effective team building skills; encouraging all team

members to express views and opinions; lending support to the team in collecting and analyzing data; and assisting the team in evaluating and implementing strategies.

Team members were expected to be active participants in each session. Team members were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions throughout each phase of the process. Members were asked to keep a journal of actions, interpretations and reflections of what occurred at each meeting. The action team had the responsibility of using the action research process to implement strategies designed to achieve increased parental involvement in the school. This team also assessed the success of each action step that was implemented.

The "non-participant observer" was assigned the task of viewing and recording the meeting proceedings and the interaction of team members from the sidelines. As a non-participating member of the team, the observer was primarily responsible for scripting what occurred during meetings and writing reactions to what was heard and observed. Her responsibilities included interpreting team member and team facilitator interaction as participants used the action research approach. The observer's journal was shared with the researcher and team members.

Timeline for the Study

Action team meetings were scheduled weekly from September 23, 1996 to May 5, 1997. Sessions were scheduled each Monday, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., barring inclement weather, holidays and previously scheduled district meetings. Twenty sessions

were scheduled. The first four sessions were used to instruct participants on the action research approach and to conduct team building strategies. During the remaining sessions the team was involved in the action research process.

Data Collection

The researcher met with action team members and discussed various means of collecting data for the study. Team members maintained a reflective journal, completed a follow-up questionnaire and participated in a team effectiveness survey at the conclusion of the project. Individual interviews were also conducted informally with each team member.

Each action team member kept a reflective journal of the meetings. Journals were used to record actions, reactions, personal thoughts, and events. Members also reflected upon their progression through the action research process. Journals were collected by the researcher, read and returned to the participants.

The researcher kept field notes of observations of team interactions as participants worked through the action research process. Field notes provided documentary evidence of group progress and individual experiences.

The non-participant observer kept a journal detailing the actions and interactions of the action team members and the facilitator. Journal information was collected, read and copied by the researcher.

Teacher participants occasionally required the assistance of their co-workers during the action research process. Members of the team informed their co-workers about the Action Team and its purpose. Grade and department meetings with non-team members were held to allow the team participant or the researcher to answer questions about the project. Teachers and parents were kept abreast of the actions taken by the team and their assistance was sought at various stages of the process such as in the distribution and collection of parental surveys.

Interviews were another mechanism for data collection. Interviews were semi-structured. A semi-structured interview allows for structured questions and also allows the interviewer to raise questions prompted by the responses presented by the interviewee. (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989).

"Two primary roles of interviewers are: to (1) locate and enlist the cooperation of selected respondents and (2) to ask questions, record answers and probe incomplete answers to ensure that answers meet the questions" (Fowler, 1993, p. 105). Fowler suggests that an interviewer needs to know the mission of the team, "ask questions exactly as stated, probe, record verbatim answers, remain professional and stay focused on the task" (p. 107-108). Interviews were conducted informally throughout the study. The researcher informally sought participants perceptions of the team, and the action research process.

Questionnaires provided another means of collecting data. The researcher used open-ended questions to obtain "unanticipated responses and to allow the respondents to

express answers to questions in their own way" (Fowler, 1993, p. 82). Fowler (1993) points out that open-ended questions are to be considered when the number of possible responses are more than the researcher could list or present to the respondent.

Quantitative data were collected from a team survey. "The survey is a research technique in which data are gathered by asking questions of a group of individuals called respondents " (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1996, p. 427). The survey consisted of ten items. Using a likert scale, respondents selected either; "strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. "A Likert scale assess attitudes by asking respondents to indicate degree of agreement-disagreement with each statement" (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1996, p. 243). This instrument assessed team effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Data collection instruments were the researcher's field notes, journal reflections of participants, transcribed interviews, and questionnaires about the team and the action research process. Data analysis involves two steps: "the identification of themes and the determination as to whether the data support the themes" (Sagor, 1992, p. 48). Sagor (1992) points out that the first step requires the researcher to identify "items or factors that come up repeatedly throughout the data and to recognize "unanticipated items" (p. 48).

The coding of journal entries, interview transcripts and the survey containing open-ended questions followed the process suggested by Sagor (1993 p. 53). Bins were created

for each category. Each bin was assigned a color code. The color red was used for the team interaction bin, blue for the action research bin, green for the role of the facilitator bin, purple for the school response bin, and black for the unexpected bin. Statements of like color were "grouped together in a single document" (Sagor, 1992, p. 53). Finally, the data were typed and summarized with appropriate quotes to answer the research questions.

Quantitative data were analyzed from a survey given to each team participant. Data analysis consisted of determining the frequencies and percentages of responses for the items on the survey (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). Percentages were computed and reported on a graph for each question of the survey. Percentages were displayed on a graph to discuss and compare the responses of parents and teachers.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the design of the study, the setting and the "Action Research Team." The role of participants were addressed, and the timeline of the study was disclosed. A description of data collection instruments and procedures used in analyzing the data was identified and discussed. This case study was designed to examine the role of an action research team composed of parents, teachers and the administer as they used the action research process to study parental involvement at Crewe Primary School.

The team consisted of six teachers, six parents, the principal who served as the facilitator, and a teacher who served as a non-participant observer. Data were collected, through interviews, reflective journals, field notes, questionnaires and a team effectiveness survey.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter was to report the analysis and interpretations of the data. This study examined team interaction as participants utilized the action research process. The data collected for this study was a descriptive analysis of data from the researchers field notes, the journal reflections of participants, transcribed interviews, and questionnaires about team interaction and the action research process. A survey was devised by the researcher to assess team effectiveness. Themes were identified with supporting data. The findings were reported by organizing the chapter into the following parts: Part I describes how working relationships evolve in action research teams. Part II reports upon the role of the principal as facilitator. Part III of the chapter reveals the members perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the action research process. In addition, a summary of the findings concludes this chapter.

Team Evolution

Research Question #1: How do working relationships evolve in action research teams?

A team can be defined as a group of individuals that come together to achieve a common goal. Maeroff (1993) defines a team as "a group of true believers who assume

ownership of new ideas and learn strategies for implementing them and for winning adherents among their colleagues in the school community" (p. 513). Good team participation develops as the team evolves and in many instances has to be encouraged and coached. In all teams there are obstacles to overcome to establish bonding and cohesiveness among members. Such was the case in the Crewe Primary School Action Team. Bonding and cohesiveness are essential to an effective team (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993). According to Cunningham and Gresso "bonding," assures that team members will dedicate the time, skills and energy needed to accomplish the team's objectives where "cohesiveness," is a feeling of belonging or being a part of the group.

Establishing A Social Bond

Getting Acquainted

Members of the team knew each other previous to the project assignment but had not worked together as a team. To assist in the development of bonding and cohesiveness, the first ten minutes of each meeting was reserved for members of the team to socialize informally.

Each brief get acquainted session included refreshments. The purpose was to get participants to interact with members they didn't know and to relax for a moment before the official process began. Ivarie (1994) states that "A short time at the beginning of each meeting perhaps over a cup of coffee, allows members to connect informally on interests beyond the business at hand" (p. 2). "Foods can play a major role in helping the group

members interact positively prior to, during, and after the meeting" (Bailey, 1991, p.2).

Refreshments, usually fresh baked hot cookies and sodas, were available at the beginning of each meeting.

Teachers A, B, F, and parents G and H noted in their journals that this time allowed them to relax, let go after working, and wind down from a busy day. Parent K recorded in her journal, "It helped us become

The non-participant observer noted in her journal, "It allowed the members of the group to unwind from a long day" (Transcript: p.1; September 30, 1996).

comfortable to the point we were ourselves, not putting on a front. Teachers and parents pointed out that this time allowed for reacquaintance. Teacher D journalized, "This gave everyone a chance to know each other and to have something to go with name and face" (Transcript: p. 8; September 23, 1996). The non-participant observer noted, "It allowed team members time to socialize and acquaint before starting the meeting. However, not all participants viewed the get acquainted time as useful. Teacher C commented in her journal, "I really never thought of this as a get acquainted time. I believe everyone came to the meetings ready to work and make the most of our time" (Transcript: p. 4; September 30, 1996). The majority of the participants, however, viewed this time as necessary before beginning a 3:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M. meeting after a long work day. Participants used this get acquainted process to enhance a social bond, however it must be recognized that some participants viewed this social process as being less than productive.

Seating Arrangements

In the initial meetings in September interaction was primarily resigned to homogeneous sub-groups; teachers mingled more with teachers and parents with parents.

The voluntary seating arrangement was frequently, a majority of teachers on one side of the table and parents on the other.

This arrangement did not vary much during the remainder of the meetings. In talking

During an informal interview, Teacher E stated, "Oh, I really hadn't noticed. I think its because like kids, we just kept the seat we started with" (Interview Transcript: p. 11; October 3, 1996).

with teachers about the seating arrangement in October, Parent G stated, "It was just my seat, nobody changed seats." The researcher journalized in March that parents changed seats or moved from one side of the table to the other side on several occasions but teachers virtually kept their original seat. The researcher noted that even though seating arrangements did not seemingly interfere with the communication or interaction of the members there was certainly a divide in the seating. Giving attention to the seating arrangement during teaming is important because it can be a prohibiting factor or barrier. Even though it is natural for people to sit and associate with those with whom they are the most familiar; this arrangement can inhibit bonding and cohesiveness from occurring as quickly as it may if members were assigned seats alternating parents and teachers.

Creating Belongingness

Journal entries in September were compared with a questionnaire completed in March, concerning teacher and parent contentment at meetings. Teachers indicated that they were comfortable in meetings beginning with the initial session. Teachers A, B, C, D and F reflected in their journals, that they never felt uncomfortable. Two parents indicated that they felt uncomfortable during the initial meetings in September. Parent H journalized, "In September, I felt inferior to the teachers with my little knowledge; but now (April), I see that we are all equal and my knowledge as a parent helped"

Parent I recorded in a journal entry, "At first (in September) I did feel uncomfortable, because I felt everyone was above me as in education or whatever." "Then I found everyone to be friendly, down to earth people, just like myself" (Transcript: p. 37; April 15, 1997).

(Transcript: p.45; April 15, 1997). The researcher observed during a meeting on September 30, 1997, and early October 28, 1997, that teachers appeared very comfortable in meetings. Noticeable communication and laughter was viewed from teachers as they talked with each other and with parents. It was difficult however to judge the comfort level of the parents. The researcher observed on October 28, 1997, that three of the parents were very outgoing and three were very quiet, however the researcher attributed their quietness to their making certain they were tuned in to what is being said and what they are expected to do. On December 2, 1997, the researcher journalized that, "Members (teachers and parents) are talking, laughing and interacting more; everyone seemed very relaxed" (Transcript: p. 22; December 2, 1996). It is important to note that maintaining an environment that creates or fosters open communication early in a meeting is very

important to the effectiveness of the team. Creating a comfort level in which parents are comfortable with teachers and teachers with parents is essential. All members must feel a level of involvement that is nonthreatening and satisfying in order for the team to function effectively in meeting its goals and to achieve optimum output from the team.

Questioning of Credentials

Initial feelings about members' abilities and expectations were expressed by teachers and parents. Parent H wrote in her

journal following the September meeting, "Was a little afraid of giving opinions because unsure of educated people." However, she wrote in

Teacher A noted in her journal, "I'm concerned about the parents having to take notes and understand everything we are doing." "It may be too deep for them to participate in this way" (Transcript: p. 9; October 15, 1996).

October, "Feeling way at ease with team now" (Transcript: p. 16; October 29, 1997). The researcher noted that even though the concern about abilities and comprehension were expressed on paper, it never revealed itself as a concern in the meetings. Parents were eager and attentive. Preconceived ideas--parents' perceptions of teachers, teachers' perceptions of parents' and parents' perceptions of themselves were present in the team. Observations from meetings showed that negative perceptions can be replaced with positive perceptions as members begin to communicate and work together.

The researcher noticed that note taking was a concern for two of the parents. Parents commented in their journals that they would have liked a mini-lesson on taking

notes. Notetaking is an area that needs to be elaborated on more fully if this process is to be used in the future.

Dealing with Disagreements and Conflicts

Team participants were asked on a questionnaire on March 18, 1997, their opinion on how they felt the team dealt with issues on which they did not initially agree. As with any team there were moments of

disagreements. The Action Team dealt with issues in which they did not initially agree.

Teacher A stated on the questionnaire, on March 18, 1997, "Most of the time we agreed and if there was a conflict over a decision we kept discussing it until we came to a final consensus."

Participants' reactions concerning the

team's ability to deal with disagreements and conflicts were expressed in a questionnaire.

Teacher C wrote, "Rarely did we disagree on matters; if an idea came up which didn't seem to be the best, a member of the group would 'kindly' present the advantages another way." Teachers B and C agreed that listening to the positive and negative surrounding issues led to an agreement everyone could live with. Teacher F stated, "Each member was asked for their opinions and suggestions." All responses were recorded and the groups reached a consensus.

Parent F stated, "I think we took the best idea we could and used it." Parent I recorded, "Everyone was flexible, we communicated as in negotiations." The non-participant observer wrote, "Even though some of the issues the team did not initially agree upon, they tried to compromise and find a happy medium in which to work; often

they took a vote on an issue." Teachers and parents stated when informally interviewed, that they noticed no conflicts between participants or participants and the facilitator. Teacher B wrote, "The facilitator had to remind us to be positive but no conflicts were noticed."

The researcher noted that when there were two different opinions about an issue, the members would discuss the pros and cons or look to the facilitator to provide more information about the issue. Group interaction was observed by the facilitator. Smith & Piele (1989) states that its important for the facilitator or leader to "watch for the eruption of conflict, the participants' body language, inputs from each participant, the expression of emotion by participants (such as anger, irritation, resentment, apathy, boredom, warmth or satisfaction), and the mixture of seriousness and playfulness in the group" (p.305). An observant facilitator can counteract or diffuse a conflict during the initial stages of a disagreement. Noting disagreement can be healthy for a group as long as it's not to a degree in which individuals and egos become the focus or issue.

Domination of Dialogue

Team participants were questioned about whether or not there was a domination of dialogue. Teachers B, C, D, and E journalized that teachers dominated most of the conversations. Teacher D explained during an informal interview on March 11, 1997, "The domination of dialogue was by the teachers because there were more teachers." Teachers A, F, and Parents G, H, and I journalized, "No one dominated the dialogue, everyone

participated" (Transcripts: March 11, 1997). The non-participant-observer noted in her journal, "At times there was a domination of dialogue by teachers as the parents sat quietly agreeing" (Transcript: p. 37; March 10, 1997). There was more dialogue from teachers, Yet when parents were asked about an issue under discussion, their response was right on target.

Teacher B journalized, "When the teachers dominated most of the conversation, the facilitator would ask the parent's opinion to involve them" (Transcript: p. 35; March 10, 1997).

In instances where there is domination of dialogue, the facilitator can address this issue as a team building strategy. The facilitator can also solicit ideas from more timid members and assist in explaining the ideas. The team leader should keep in mind that quietness during the initial sessions of a team by some members may not necessarily mean incomprehension. It may signify a fear of expression or timidity before an unfamiliar group of individuals.

Team Sensitivity--Words and Actions

Team effort expressed in words and actions are recognized as being important to team spirit and team productivity. Attentiveness to issues and concerns of the group and sensitivity to the feelings of all members is essential for good productive team work. The non-participant observer noted in her journal at a meeting in November, "I find it very disturbing that during this discussion, a participant is filling out a catalog order form openly on the table; parents and other teachers are looking at her" (Transcript: p. 18;

November 4, 1996). The researcher noted in her journal that parents became very quiet when the comments, that money, power and

the lottery would get parents more involved in the schools, were made and they remained so during much of the meeting. Teacher E journalized at the end of this meeting, "Mrs.

The non-participant observer journalized later during the same meeting, "The facilitator raised the following question to the team: 'What will it take to get more parents involved?' Teacher A stated, "Money, power, the lottery" (Transcript: p. 17; November 4, 1996).

Johnson tries hard to make all the team

participants feel valued" (Transcript: p. 15; November 4, 1996). In order to return direction and a sense of continuity to the meeting, the facilitator intervened and reminded the team to remain focused on the task before them and upon their agreed upon rules concerning "what makes an effective team."

Developing Teamwork

A workable definition of teamwork must be established and embraced by the members to foster growth, bonding, cohesiveness, and productivity in a team. It is important that team members review or learn team building skills to overcome common problems associated with teams and model skills necessary for effective teamwork. Team building activities involve three functions: "Motivation, training and celebration that serve to enhance the cohesiveness of the group" (Smith & Piele, 1989, p. 305).

Defining and Establishing Teamwork

Team participants were asked to give their definition and feedback of the team concept on a questionnaire on March 25, 1997. Teachers A, B, C, D, E and Parents F, G, and H defined teamwork as working together for a common cause, sharing the workload, and everyone contributing to the finished product.

<p>Parent I stated on the questionnaire on March 25, 1997, "Teamwork is remembering two heads are better than one."</p>

The action research team identified the necessary attributes for members to function as a team. Teachers A, C, D, and parents G, H, and I agreed on the characteristics needed for teamwork. Characteristics mentioned included: being polite, courteous, positive, flexible, a good listener and sharing a common goal. Parent H wrote, "Flexibility and the ability to accept others opinions and views are important." Teacher E wrote, "Time to bond, equal opportunities to contribute to the team, feeling of fairness among the members, a common goal, a facilitator, an encouraging physical environment to meet in, opportunities to grow professionally and to socialize are necessities for teamwork."

Team Building Activities

A team building activity was introduced in September, October and November. "The process of team building involves getting acquainted, building identity, providing mutual support, valuing differences, and developing synergy" (Kagar, 1992). The

researcher commenced team building activities at the initiation of the action research process. Initial comments made by team members in their journals reinforced the need for team members to be encouraged to approach the

project from a team perspective. Team building activities were used to build team support. Team support includes actively listening to other members, asking questions for clarification and elaboration, supporting others in words and actions,

Teacher D journalized following the composition of a letter approved by the team, "I do not like it. The others on the team like it, so I will be quiet and not complain--the majority rules. That is what being part of a committee is" (Transcript: p. 8; October 7, 1996).

and letting others know when they have done well (Ivarie, 1994, p. 2). Team building activities were conducted following refreshments for approximately fifteen minutes.

Exercises involved, "Getting to Know You," "What Makes an Effective Team," and "Building Consensus."

Getting To Know You:

On September 30, 1996, the facilitator introduced the first team building activity--"Getting to Know You." The non-participant observer journalized, "Members were seemingly amazed at what they learned about each other and what they had in common" (Transcript: p. 6; September 30, 1996). Teacher D noted in her journal, "Enjoyed getting to know about the team. After this, it is no longer, just a committee, we are beginning to know one another" (Transcript: p. 3; September 30, 1996). Parent J was right on target when she stated, "The purpose of this activity involves getting to know one another and

the main purpose is bringing teachers and parents together" (Transcript: p. 2; September 30, 1996).

What Makes an Effective Team:

The second team building activity was conducted at the fourth session in October. This exercise was entitled, "What Makes an Effective Team?" The team members divided into three groups with teacher and parent representation on each team. After much discussion, each group listed three characteristics of an effective team. As the group returned to the table, they noticed the similarities of their answers. They then came up with one list for the team.

The non-participant observer journalized, "It seemed to have been an exercise they enjoyed, there was noticeable smiles, laughter, and talking as the final draft was taped to the board" (Transcript: p. 15; October 28, 1996).

The third team building activity conducted in November was entitled, "Building Consensus." The team worked in small groups to discuss and identify factors that build consensus. Both groups identified five factors that inhibited consensus and five factors that promoted consensus. Finally the small groups merged into one large group to discuss their ideas. The team identified and posted the top five factors that promoted team consensus and the five that inhibited team consensus. The factors were: respect for others, cooperation, feeling comfortable enough for everyone to participate, time on task and being opened minded. Parent G journalized, "I felt at ease with every one of the items we agreed upon in our consensus items" (Transcript: p. 19; November 11, 1996). Parent H

wrote, "I didn't come up with any ideas today, couldn't get my thinking cap on today; but the small and whole group worked well together" (Transcript: p. 16; November 11, 1996). The non-participant observer wrote, "The groups were very democratic" (Transcript: p. 21; November 11, 1996). Phrases overhead were, "Where do we start?; How does this sound?; Is that all right?; Can we rephrase this ?; and so we need this?" The team building activities encouraged the communication and discussion of specific areas identified by the facilitator as being necessary for cohesiveness and decision making.

Modeling of Good Team Building Skills

The modeling of good team building skills by participants is essential for group effectiveness. Once team building skills were developed and accepted by the group, all members were expected to adhere to the rules generated. The modeling of good team building skills by the facilitator, teachers and parents can increase the effectiveness of a team.

The Facilitator:

Team building skills were modeled by the facilitator, according to teachers, parents and the non-participant observer. Team members were asked on March 25, 1997, to respond to a questionnaire about the facilitator's modeling of team building skills. Teachers B and C recorded, "The facilitator reminded us to be

Parent G journalized, "The facilitator let me know that it was our team and we had to make the decision" (Transcript: p. 41; March 25, 1997).

positive and praised us for jobs well done." Teacher A noted, "Mrs. Johnson tried to keep everyone in the group on a positive note even when we were all in a negative state, she kept us on track and made sure we had a consensus of the group to make a decision.

Teacher E recorded, "She modeled them somewhat but seemed to do a better job as the constant facilitator, in that she kept us focused and moving." "She demonstrated to us the skill of effective and graceful communication." Teacher F stated, "Mrs. Johnson strived to include everyone and recognized their ideas and suggestions." "She encouraged small group discussions so that all members felt included and thanked us for our help and cooperation." Parent G noted, "She would start us off on what we weren't sure of then she would let us take it from there." Parents H and I concurred that the facilitator got the meeting flowing. The non-participant observer wrote in her journal, "One strategy that Mrs. Johnson modeled was to listen on as an idea formulated around the table and became an objective. She was open to new ideas and concepts."

The Teachers and Parents:

According to a questionnaire completed on March 25, 1997, by the Action Research team, members believe teachers and parents modeled the team building strategies during meetings. Teachers A and B indicated on the questionnaire that teachers were courteous, open-minded and fairly positive. Teacher C noted, "During our meetings no one acted as though their ideas were better than any others." Teachers C, D and F indicated that even when the facilitator was not present the team building strategies were followed. Parents G,

I and K stated that, "Teachers respected teachers and parents." Parent H wrote, "Teachers accepted other teacher's and parent's ideas and suggestions." The non-participant observer noted, "Teachers worked well together, listening to each other's ideas and compromising."

Teacher responses were solicited on a questionnaire as to whether parent participants practiced or modeled the team building strategies during meetings. Teachers A, B, and F reported that parents were positive and participated in discussions. Teacher E wrote, "The parents were true participants and seemed to feel reasonably comfortable with making suggestions and contributions." Teachers C, C, E and F noted that even though parents had scheduling problems and erratic attendance they were cooperative and provided valuable input. Parents G, H, I and K agreed that parents listened, shared the work load and respected others ideas. The non-participant observer wrote, "Parents worked well with all participants; they contributed many well thought of ideas and made a lasting impression."

Establishing Trust

Participant opinions about trust were solicited during an informal interview. Teachers and parents felt that trust was important to a team. Their perception of trust varied. Teachers A and B concurred that trust meant "To be open with your ideas, without feeling someone will put you down" (Transcript: p. 63; March 17, 1997). Teacher C, D and Parent H stated, "It means being able to rely on each other to do their part and being

prepared for meetings" (Transcript: p. 63; March 17, 1997). Teachers E and F in essence felt it meant following "The Golden Rule".

Teachers and parents were surveyed on a questionnaire on March 25, 1997, about the establishment of trust and how trust might be created. Teacher A noted that trust is best established by "recognizing the importance of each member." Members of

Teachers B, D, E, and F and parents G, H, and I stated during an informal interview that trust is established when members are "openly and freely communicating with each other." (Transcript: p. 63; March 17, 1997).

the team reported they assisted in creating trust. Teachers and parents believed this was achieved by respecting everyone in the group, being prepared for meeting, following the characteristics they had identified for an "Effective Team," and the sharing of ideas. Teachers and parents stated that the facilitator helped to establish trust. Teacher A stated, "The facilitator made sure we all made contributions." Parent I stated, "From the beginning the facilitator encouraged each member; no matter how small or little we said or did, she made it out to be important; she bragged on us all." The non-participant observer recorded, "The facilitator helped by making sure each person had sufficient time and resources to complete her task" (Transcript: p. 38; March 17, 1997).

Achieving Consensus

Teachers and parents stated on a survey questionnaire on March 18, 1997, that consensus was reached through discussing and listening to each member's views and opinions. Teachers A and B noted that the facilitator would also ask if everyone agreed

with various actions. The non-participant observer wrote, "Consensus was achieved by each member contributing ideas, information and resources and the through consensus discussing and coming to an agreement best for all parties." Consensus is an important part of teamwork because it is necessary for all participants to agree on issues for team progress.

Working as a Team

Teachers and parents indicated that they liked working as a team because of what was accomplished. Teacher D journalized, "The work is shared, more can get accomplished and one person does not feel overwhelmed" (Transcript: p. 50; March 10, 1997).

Parent H stated in her journal, "I think team work is great; when you work as a team you get so much more accomplished and you get so many ideas" (Transcript: p. 37; February 24, 1997).

The researcher noted that the team followed the agenda set forth even in the absence of the facilitator. Teacher E wrote in her journal on February 10, 1997, "Today's meeting progressed well; we all got together and got things going." "When Mrs. Johnson came in she said, 'this is great' and told the team she was going back out on bus duty but I think she saw that the team had really gotten going and she wanted to keep the momentum going." Bonding increased team momentum and thus increased team productivity.

Team Commitment

The action research team was initially composed of twelve participants (6 teachers and 6 parents). During the course of the project participants became visibly committed to the goals and objectives of the team. Team members would telephone the researcher to obtain updates on the team's progress when personal responsibilities prevented them from attending team meetings. Eventually, three parent participants could no longer be active team members due to family illness and increased job responsibilities. Even though these three were no longer able to attend every meeting, their experiences on the team encouraged them to take more active roles in other areas of school operation. For example, after one parent was no longer able to participate on the team because of evening work hours, she assisted staff members by assembling and distributing copies of the School/Parent/Student Compact at a Parent Teacher Conference. Another parent who could not attend meetings regularly because of illness in her family, returned to volunteer in the school for a few hours weekly. One parent (team participant) sent written correspondence expressing her regrets in no longer being able to attend meetings and requesting the team to call her if she could assist in the future in any manner. Active participation, trust and a feeling of belonging resulted in a shared commitment by all team members.

The Principal as Facilitator

Research Question 2: What is the role of the principal as facilitator?

The facilitator's role involved officiating at the beginning of meetings, reviewing of the agenda, requesting additions or deletions to the agenda, helping to set the focus of the meeting and then stepping off onto the sidelines to allow the team to make decisions and take actions. The facilitator commenced each meeting. The facilitator explained the role of members and the non-participant observer. The facilitator's role included: defining the team's method of recording observations and comments, guiding the members into each meeting's activities by soliciting summarizations of the previous week's activities or assignments and reviewing the action research process step consistent with the activities set forth in the agenda. She made certain each step of the action research process was followed. The facilitator introduced team building strategies. She refocused the team when necessary on their purpose and posted team building strategies. The facilitator praised and supported the team in their efforts and boosted morale when needed. During each team meeting, Attempts were made to get other team members to take the leadership role. In most instances the facilitator assumed the role of a silent observer by removing herself from the meeting table leaving the full responsibilities of establishing objectives and actions to the team of teachers and parents. The facilitator participated during group discussions only to refocus or redirect the group. The team had the responsibility of making decisions about issues effecting the team and it's goals.

The facilitator introduced the non-participant observer and informed the team of her role. The non-participant observer, observed the facilitator and the team as they interacted and worked to achieve their goal. The facilitator discussed the writing of reflections, thoughts and ideas about what occurred at meetings between members, the facilitator and about the action research process. Each participant was given a notebook on which to record minutes of each meeting and their observations and reflections.

The researcher discussed the time scheduled for meetings, 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. each Monday, from October through March of the 1996-97 school term. Due to a delay in the returns of surveys, and the scheduling of the workshop, the final meeting was held on the first Monday in May, 1997.

Advantages of Having a Facilitator

Teachers A, C, D, E, and F indicated on a follow-up questionnaire on April 15, 1997, that one advantage of having a facilitator is to keep the group on task. Parent G recorded, "She (the facilitator) would get us started or give us ideas of how to get started and then we would go from there." Parent H noted, "The facilitator got the team started with suggestions, made sure the team said the things in the right way and that team members focused, working toward a common goal and end result."

Choice of Facilitator

Teachers and parents indicated on a questionnaire on April 15, 1997, that it was a good choice having the school principal as facilitator. Teachers A, C and D indicated that having the principal as facilitator was a wise choice because she had an idea of what needed

<p>Teacher E indicated on a questionnaire on April 15, 1997, "Unfortunately, no matter how hard one tries, there is always an element of authority when the principal is present;"</p>
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to be accomplished. Teachers B and E stated, The facilitator needed to be a person of authority, so that the team members would listen and focus; in addition, with the principal as facilitator, there were no feelings of animosity towards the facilitator because it was not a peer."

Parent H indicated, "I don't think the principal as facilitator was a hindrance to the team, she didn't let her position show in the meeting." The non-participant observer stated, "Having the principal be the facilitator was a great choice because then that one person would be aware of what was acceptable and the guidelines needed to complete the goal."

From the questionnaire, four of the six teachers on the team indicated that they felt a facilitator was crucial to the process. Comments ranged from a need to "Guide the team in the right direction," to "getting on the right track when you're on the wrong road or hit a dead end." The non-participant observer wrote, "The facilitator remained objective and focused."

Freedom of thought, actions and expressions was not totally hindered with the principal as facilitator of the action team but possibly guarded. Teacher B wrote, "I believe

I had freedom of thought and action, but sometimes was more guarded with comments." Teacher E wrote, "After the principal had facilitated the process and growth, alternating the facilitator became an excellent way for team members to feel comfortable."

Separation of Roles--Principal and Facilitator

Opinions were solicited on a questionnaire on April 15, 1997. Opinions were mixed as to whether there was a separation between the principal's role and the facilitator's role. Teacher A wrote, "The principal tried to step back and look objectively at everything." Teacher B wrote, "I believe they were one and the same; although we made the final decisions." Parent G wrote, "There was a separation of roles because the principal has the last say in situations at a school, but the facilitator leaves it up to the team itself." The non-participant observer wrote that, "There was a separation of roles, because the facilitator allowed the team to freely discuss and brainstorm while principals usually give guidelines that have a specific ending result."

The Action Research Process

Research Question 3: What do team members perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of the action research process?

The engagement of stakeholders in the change process can be an effective strategy for reform. Positive and successful change must have the involvement and ownership of those expected to carry out the change (Coch & French, 1948; Imber & Duke, 1984, Mckay, 1992). It is necessary for all stakeholders to agree a need for change, develop a plan for change and implement a strategy for change. The action research models of Kemis, Elliot and Calhoun were reviewed and analyzed for applicability to the issues being undertaken in this study. The researcher developed an adaptation of these models which incorporates team building strategies as an essential component of the action research process. The steps in the Johnson Action Research Model are:

1. **Orientation to the Action Research Process--Incorporate Team Building Strategies**
2. **Identification of a Focus Area**
3. **Investigation of the Researched Literature**
4. **Determination of Data Needed & Development of Data Collection Instruments**
5. **Aggregation of Data**
6. **Organization, Analysis & Interpretation of Data**

7. Formation of Action Plan & Implementation of Strategies

8. Evaluation, Reflection & Celebration of Strategies and Accomplishments

1. Orientation to the Action Research Process

The first step of the Johnson's Action Research Model is the orientation process.

This step of the orientation or learning phase of the process involved the teaching of the

Action Research process. The researcher

provided a workable definition of the process,

listed and explained each step of the process,

guided discussions and entertained questions. Discussions were held on the data required

by the researcher. Participants were instructed on journalizing. Other methods of securing

data were also discussed, such as: video and audio taping of sessions, informal interviews,

and survey questionnaires.

During an informal interview on September 23, 1996, Teacher E and Parent K expressed excitement about the team and hoped they could be of real assistance.

The second phase of the orientation process was the incorporation of team building

strategies. Team building strategies were incorporated to build levels of respect and trust

between members of the team. Team building strategies included activities such as: get

acquainted sessions; providing information on what makes as effective team; and

techniques for building consensus. Team building strategies were introduced to encourage

bonding between members.

During the initial meeting held on September 23, 1997 the facilitator explained the action research process to the team. Each step was written on the board and discussed. Participants copied the steps in their journal.

The purpose and function of the team was outlined. Expectations of members were discussed. The team was informed of the role of the participants, the facilitator and the non-participant observer. The researcher discussed with the team the process of journalizing. Each member was required to write reflections, thoughts and ideas about what occurred at meetings, interaction between members and the facilitator and about the action research process. Participants were told that their identification would be anonymous. The team met on Mondays from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. A total of twenty sessions were held between the months of September, 1996 and May, 1997.

Teacher and parent reflections were mixed regarding how they felt at the first meeting. Teacher D journalized, "I was concerned with this model and do we understand what is involved" (Transcript: p. 5; September 23, 1996). Parent G stated in her journal, "Some of us were wondering what to expect at least I was; it seems exciting and a challenge to me" (Transcript: p. 1; September 23, 1996).

Team building strategies were introduced during the orientation period. The action research team, consisting of parents and teachers was a collaborative approach to problem solving. The incorporation of team building skills helped to insure a smooth working relationship between participants.

2. Identification of a Focus Area

The identification of an area of interest or issue of concern is the second step in the Johnson's Action Research Model. The identified area should be one in which team participants viewed a need for a solution. Participant views were solicited and a discussion held concerning why they believed the area identified was a problem requiring attention. The focus area identified by the action research team was "parental involvement." The expectations for parental involvement included the areas of parenting workshops, communication, volunteering, decision making, learning at home, and community involvement. The team identified two domains of interest--the development of a school/parent/student compact and the organization of a parenting workshop on "Positive Discipline."

3. Investigation of the Researched Literature

The third step of the Johnson's Model, reviewing current literature and research, serves as a means of expanding the knowledge base of each team member. Research articles allowed for fresh view points and the entertainment of new ideas by team members. The discussion of crucial factors relating to the problem after the review of current literature allowed participants an opportunity to review and reconstruct view points based on newly acquired information. This step in the Johnson's Action Research Model allowed for a detailed discussion of the reasons causing the problem and possible solutions.

The team reviewed researched literature concerning parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement, strategies used in other school systems to overcome the barriers and methods for getting parents involved. Participants then reviewed compacts composed by several school systems. School/Parent/Teacher Compacts are required by schools receiving chapter I funds. The compacts are agreements between the school, parents and students outlining individual responsibilities ensuring student success. The team divided into three small parent/teacher groups and reviewed the researched literature on "Barriers of Parental Involvement." Individual groups were then realigned to form one large group to discuss their findings. A list of fifteen reasons for "Why parents do not participate in school related activities" was composed. Teacher C journalized, "We worked in pairs and read articles about the barriers of parental involvement; we identified many barriers which were seen as problems in our school" (Transcript: p.9; October 28, 1996).

4. Determination of Data Needed and Development of Data Collection

Instruments

The fourth step of the Johnson's Action Research Model is the determination of data needed and development of data collection instruments. The team decided upon what data were needed to reach its goal. Participants determined methodology of data collection to be employed. Surveys and interviews were used by the team to collect data concerning parent involvement. Surveys and questionnaires were developed by the team through consensus.

Questionnaires used in the interview process were semi-structured. The questionnaires were designed to solicit responses from parents and teachers on what they thought were barriers to parental involvement in the schools.

5. Aggregation of Data

The fifth step of the Johnson's Action Research Model involves the aggregation of data. Data were collected through qualitative and quantitative means. Existing school data were reviewed. Existing school data such as: census, student attendance of students, number of parent volunteers, types of school-parent communication, and records of parent's attendance at PTA meetings were made available to the team. From the data reviewed concerning the existing parent involvement in the school the team decided to compose a survey to get parent responses on the issue of parent involvement at Crewe Primary School. A parent survey was sent to the parents of Crewe Primary School students (Appendix C). Teachers at Crewe Primary School assisted in the distribution of surveys by placing a survey form (compacts and the parent survey) in students progress reports which were sent home weekly. The survey assessed parent participation in student-school activities, parents' reasons for participation in their child's education or school activities, barriers inhibiting participation and workshops or programs of interest to parents.

6. Organization, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The sixth step of the Johnson's Action Research Model is the organization, analysis and interpretation of data. Data from the parent survey were organized by the teachers at each grade level. Teachers tallied the results of their homeroom students. Results were sent to the grade representative or department chairperson. Frequencies were computed by the action team to provide survey question results. Questions utilized to assist in the analysis of data were:

1. What are the student/school activities in which parents do participate, would like to participate and can not participate?
2. What reasons do parents give for participating in their child's education or school activities?
3. What reasons do parents give for not participating in their child's education or school activities?
4. What workshops and programs are of interest to parents?
5. What is the best time for parents to attend workshops?

Teacher A journalized, "This is the beginning of developing a survey for parents to find why they can't come to school" "For those who are involved, these answers will help us to determine why we can't get all parents involved and what we can do to invite them to participate" (Transcript: p. 27; December 2, 1996).

Teacher D journalized, "This survey was hard to put together but finally it fell into place" (Transcript: p. 33; December 2, 1996).

7. Formation of Action Plan and Implementation of Strategies

The seventh step of the Johnson's Action Research Model is the formation of an action plan and the implementation of strategies. The process of developing a team produced action plan disclosed a unified statement of what the team expected to occur as a result of actions or strategies implemented. The action plan focused the team towards the development of strategies to achieve desired goals. Action steps were prioritized for implementation. The team implemented strategies that had the best chance of accomplishing the goal. The team decided upon timelines, task assignments, and how innovations were to be monitored and measured.

As parent G journalized, "This afternoon, February 24, 1997, we tallied our results. Next we need to decide on what we are going to do to help parents" (Transcript: p. 41; February 24, 1997). "The action team decided upon the following action steps:

- The development of a school/parent/student compact (Appendix C)
- The display of a Parent Information Board in the school's front lobby to make parents aware of various student and teachers projects and to inform parents of various educational and social services available.
- A workshop on "Positive Discipline" conducted on May 1, 1997; the number one choice of parents from survey results.

8. Evaluation, Reflection and Celebration of Strategies and Accomplishments

The eighth step of the Johnson's Action Research Model is the evaluation, reflection and celebration of strategies and accomplishments. The action team determined if strategies were successful for each action step. The team used the measures generated for each activity to assist in its evaluation of the action taken.

Team members had the opportunity to reflect upon the goals they had accomplished as a team during the final meeting. Members openly reflected upon their initial feelings and uncertainties and how much they had grown together as a team during the twenty work sessions. Members freely recognized the contributions of their peers and applauded those contributions. In a follow-up interview on May 8, 1997, Parent G stated, "We wanted to prove that parents and teachers can work together to achieve a goal and we wanted to actually accomplish the goal." Teacher E stated on May 8, 1997, "I believe we are all proud of what we learned and accomplished."

<p>In a follow-up interview, Parent G stated, "There was a feeling of having accomplished a great task" (Transcript: p. 66; May 5, 1997).</p>

Team Reactions to the Action Research Process

Pre-Opinions

Teachers and parents expressed the following initial concerns about the action research process in September in their journal. Teacher D stated, "I was concerned with this model and do we understand what is involved; hopefully my questions will be answered as the team progresses" (Transcript: p. 1; September 23, 1996). Parent G stated,

"Some of us were wondering what to expect, at least I was; it seems exciting and a challenge for me" (Transcript: p. 2; September 30, 1996). Teacher E and Parents H and K expressed that they hoped they would be of some real assistance. They indicated that they thought it would be a challenge.

Teachers and parents on the team gave the following opinions about the action research model on a questionnaire administered on November 25, 1996. Teachers A and B thought the process would be too "time consuming." Teacher C felt that, "It would be difficult to follow each step and be productive."

Teacher E had a concern of a different nature. She stated, "I am skeptical because when an administrator is involved there are usually hidden agendas, and no real stage for [non-administrator] input." "I am not sure about how much work will be required; plus I have a hard time accepting a change especially when I think I'm right--I wonder will this just be another source of frustration?"

Parents expressed the following concerns. Parent G stated, "I am skeptical, because I'm not sure there is anything we can do to encourage parents to get more involved with their child's education." Parent H reported, "Are we going to get the parents that already support child and school; we want the ones that don't support."

Post-Opinions

Teachers and parents expressed their opinions about the action research model on April 21, 1997, on a questionnaire. Teacher A stated, "I think using Action Research made us think of all areas of a problem and consider all kinds of solutions." Teacher B stated, I found that it wasn't as time consuming as I thought because we follow these steps anyway, unconsciously everyday." Teacher C reported, "I have seen that this model is very easy to follow. The sequence of steps were so logical." Teacher D stated, "I am no longer skeptical and no longer quite as overwhelmed; I have seen the model used successfully." Teacher E stated, "I thought the action research model was excellent; I loved the way it developed into a team with all peers and no hidden agendas and after participating on the team, I think this method of research is very promising, especially, in dealing with the public and public opinions."

Teacher F stated on a questionnaire administered on April 21, 1997, "Action Research is a good process to follow in committee meetings because it fosters a cohesiveness among committee members."

Parents expressed the following opinions about the process in April. Their opinions related more to the goal when questioned about the process. Parent G states, "I'm not skeptical now, I sincerely believe we made a step further in getting parents and teachers more involved with each other." Parent H stated, "It's good because now we know some of the barriers that parents put up with, and we worked to knock some (a lot) of them down." Parent I stated, "I can see communicating, working together can be useful for

teachers, parents and the children." Parent K wrote, "I felt better because as time went along, the members became more focused."

Advantages of Using the Action Research Model

Teachers and parents cited numerous reasons on a questionnaire administered on April 21, 1997, concerning advantages of using the model. Reasons cited included: solving a problem in an organized or systematic manner and providing opportunities for many solutions by encouraging opposing sides to work on a common goal. Teachers and parents indicated that they believed this process promoted a positive working atmosphere and encouraged flexibility. Teacher A stated, "It helped us to solve a problem in an organized manner." Parent B recorded, "It makes you think through things, using research, getting ideas and opinions." Teacher E stated, "The advantages lie in its flexibility yet defined structured format. It allows for individual and varied input, yet maintains an established method to follow." Teacher E further stated, "Although one of the team's functions is to conduct research, the team itself is an interesting subject for research because of its action choices and evolving roles." Teacher F stated, "A positive working atmosphere is established; the merits of numerous opposing views are discussed."

Parents C and D noted on a questionnaire administered on April 21, 1997, "The model provided for brainstorming and the sharing of ideas."

Parent G recorded, "It taught us how to handle situations and what steps to follow."

Parent H wrote, "It gave us guidelines on what our team was going to accomplish during the year; how we were going to get the support from parents to teachers and from teachers to parents."

Parent K noted on a questionnaire on April 21, 1997, "The advantage is that it brought two opposing sides together to work on a common goal--educating our children."

Positive Aspects of Action Research

Participants were asked to respond to the positive aspects of action research on a questionnaire administered on April 21, 1997. Teacher B stated, "It encouraged positive attitudes in working to solve problems instead of sitting around complaining." Parent G identified the positive aspect as "Parents and teachers coming together, sharing ideas, trying to find ways to get other parents involved and showing that we really care about our children's future."

Teacher C stated on a questionnaire on April 21, 1997, "Everyone had to reach agreements together; we felt comfortable enough to really discuss agenda items, determine pros and cons, and then reach agreements."

Usefulness of the Process

Questionnaire responses on the usefulness of the process were solicited from participants on April 21, 1997. Teacher A responded that, "The process was 'democratic,' meaning input from everyone is very important and will help to find the best solution to a problem." Teacher C stated, "The process made us do a great deal of brainstorming which

led to an extensive list of ideas and wonderful discussions." Teacher D believed that the whole process kept the group on task and allowed results to occur. Teacher E stated, "The process was very impressive; it was functional, it incorporated research unknowns (such as a parent's objections to completing the school contract); provided a method to process the data results, and allowed re-evaluation." Teacher E further stated, "The information we learned, not just from the team, but also from the research information was very significant in terms of achieving our overall goal."

Parent G stated on a questionnaire on April 21, 1997, "It was like we were talking to the parents and when we got them back, they were talking back to us."

Parent G stated, "The process was useful because it allowed us to find out the reasons parents weren't getting involved; it gave us a chance to try to help." Parent H stated, "It allowed us to reach parents who are supporting the school, wasn't supporting and just aren't going to give support with help." Parent K stated, "Surveys gave excellent insight about how parents felt about the school."

Steps of the Process Easy to Accomplish

Parents and teachers stated on a questionnaire administered on April 21, 1997, that "Identifying the problem was the easiest step to accomplish." Teachers A, B, C, D and Parent G stated that, "Identifying the problem was not difficult." Teacher D states it best by saying, "Someone can always tell what the problem is."

Disadvantages or Negative Aspects of Using the Process

Teachers and parents cited several negative aspects of the action research process. In response to a questionnaire on April 21, 1997, the most numerous negative aspect voiced by participants as being a disadvantage of the action research process was, "too time consuming." Teachers A, B, C, D, F and Parent K stated that "the process was very time consuming." In an informal interview, participants stated that a lot was accomplished, but the accomplishments involved "too many sessions."

Several teachers and parents cited "brainstorming" as the most mentally draining. Having to think of as many possibilities as possible to carry out an objective can be exhausting after an eight hour work day. The anxiety of waiting was another disadvantage cited by participants. Teacher E stated, "The most mentally draining was the initial portion of the process, because the team hadn't completed any action steps and members were just beginning to establish themselves with one another."

Outcome of Using the Process

When asked the accomplishments of the team during an informal interview on April 9, 1997, teachers and parents mentioned the "School/Parent/Student Compact." The "School/Parent/Student Compact" (See Appendix C) outlined methodologies and strategies agreed to by the action research team to ensure student success. Teacher A stated, "The compact provided a survey to see how the parents participated in their child's education or would participate." The development of the parent survey was cited as an

accomplishment because results were used to organize a "Positive Discipline Workshop." Also mentioned was the "Parent Communication Board."

Parent G stated, "Teachers and parents learned how to listen to each other and respect what each other had to say." Parent H stated, "We learned how to solve a problem." Parent K stated, "We learned what prevented parents from getting involved and what type of expectations they had for our school."

Belief in Process

Teachers and parents on the team expressed belief in the process during an informal interview on April 17, 1997. Both expressed that the action research process provided a framework to reach decisions in order to solve problems or determine future actions. Teacher D stated, "I saw it work! The whole group accomplished at least three successful projects by using this process." Teacher E stated, "I think this process has a lot of potential especially for completing research on a school or public-based setting and that the format could be applied to non-research committees and teams as well." Parents G and H expressed that not only did "this process help with a school issue but that they believe it can be used throughout other life situations."

The Action Team Survey Results

A survey was developed by the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the team. A survey was distributed to Action Team members in May, 1997. Ten of the original twelve participants completed the project and the survey. Participants used a Likert scale to answer the questions. The respondents chose from "strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree." For each analysis, the relative percentages of parents and teachers were compared to determine participant's beliefs, feelings and reactions to the team and to the action research process. Team reactions were surveyed on ten items.

1. The action team was focused on its purpose and goals.
2. As a team member, I felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process.
3. Communication between team members was respectful, open and honest.
4. Decisions effecting the team were made through consensus.
5. As a team member, I worked towards achieving team goals.
6. The team had an effective facilitator.
7. Team members were free to express their ideas and opinions.
8. Team members encouraged, supported and praised one another in their efforts and contributions.
9. High expectations were demonstrated throughout the project.
10. The "Action Research Process" is a good approach to problem solving.

Team responses were quantified and are depicted as findings presented in Figures 1-10.

THE ACTION TEAM SURVEY RESULTS

Team Effectiveness

1. The action team was focused on its purpose and goals.

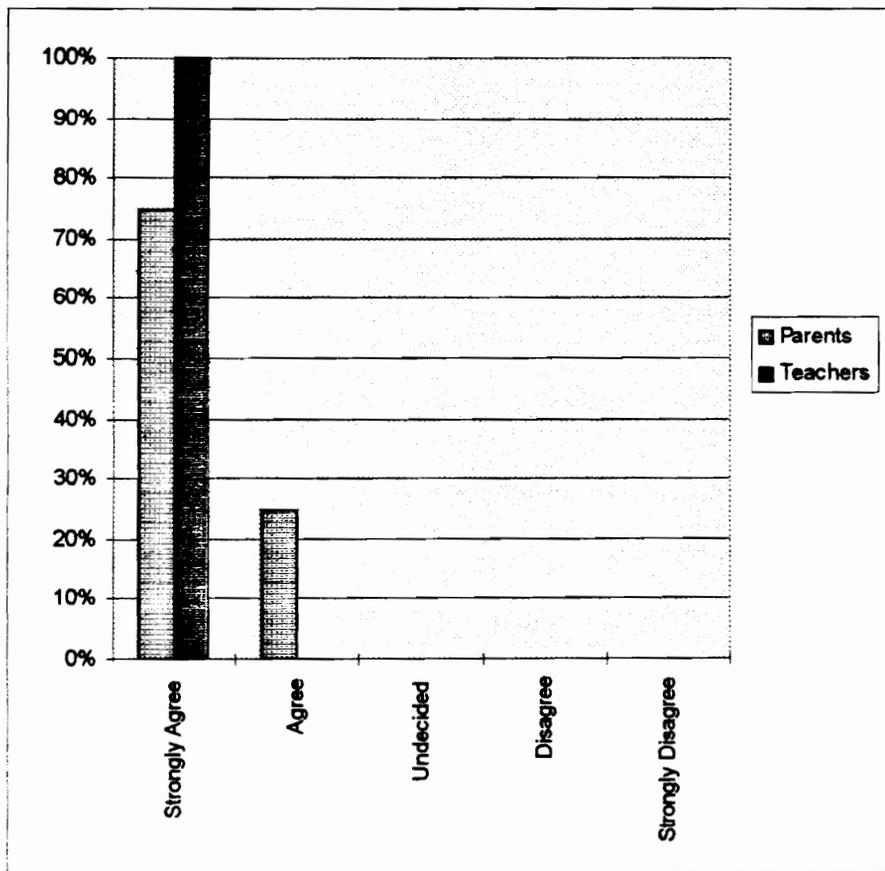


Figure 1. Team Focus. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 100 percent of the teachers strongly agreed that the action team was focused on its purpose and goals. Seventy-five percent of the parents strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that the action team was focused on its purpose and goals.

2. As a team member, I felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process.

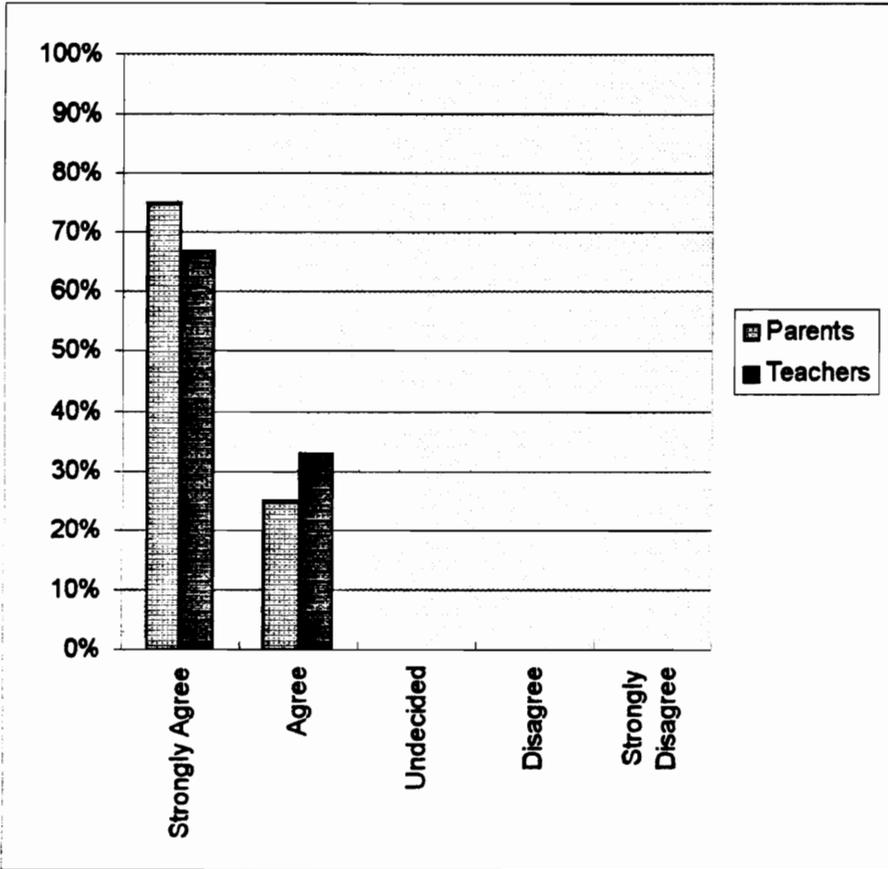


Figure 2. Team Comfort Level. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 67 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed that they felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process. Seventy-five percent of the parents strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that they felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process.

3. Communication between team members was respectful, open and honest.

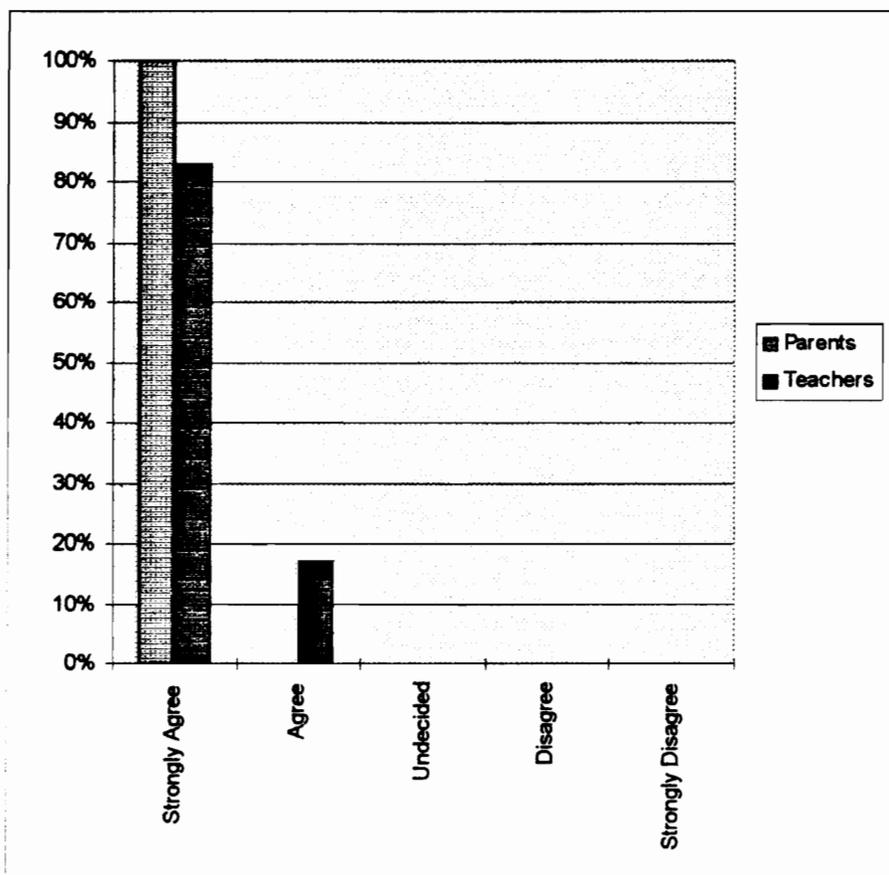


Figure 3. Team Communication. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 83 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 17 percent agreed that communication between team members was respectful, open and honest. One hundred percent of the parents strongly agreed that communication between team members was respectful, open and honest.

4. Decisions effecting the team were made through consensus.

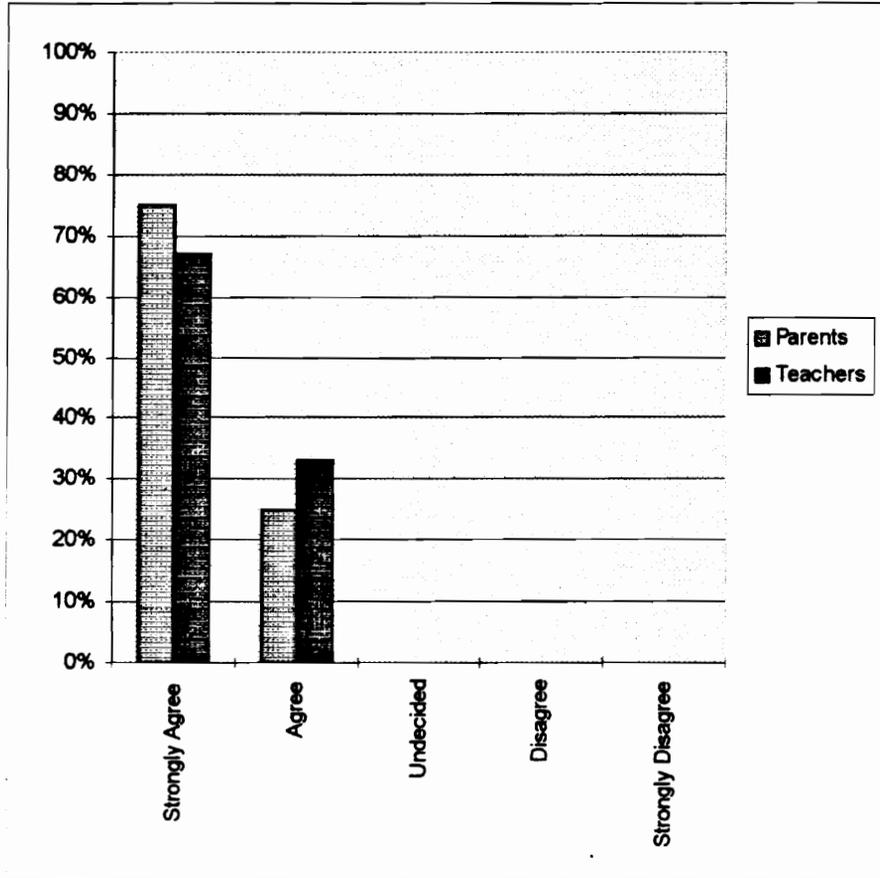


Figure 4. Team Decision Making. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 67 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed that decisions effecting the team were made through consensus. Seventy-five percent of the parents strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that the decisions effecting the team were made through consensus.

5. As a team member, I worked towards achieving team goals.

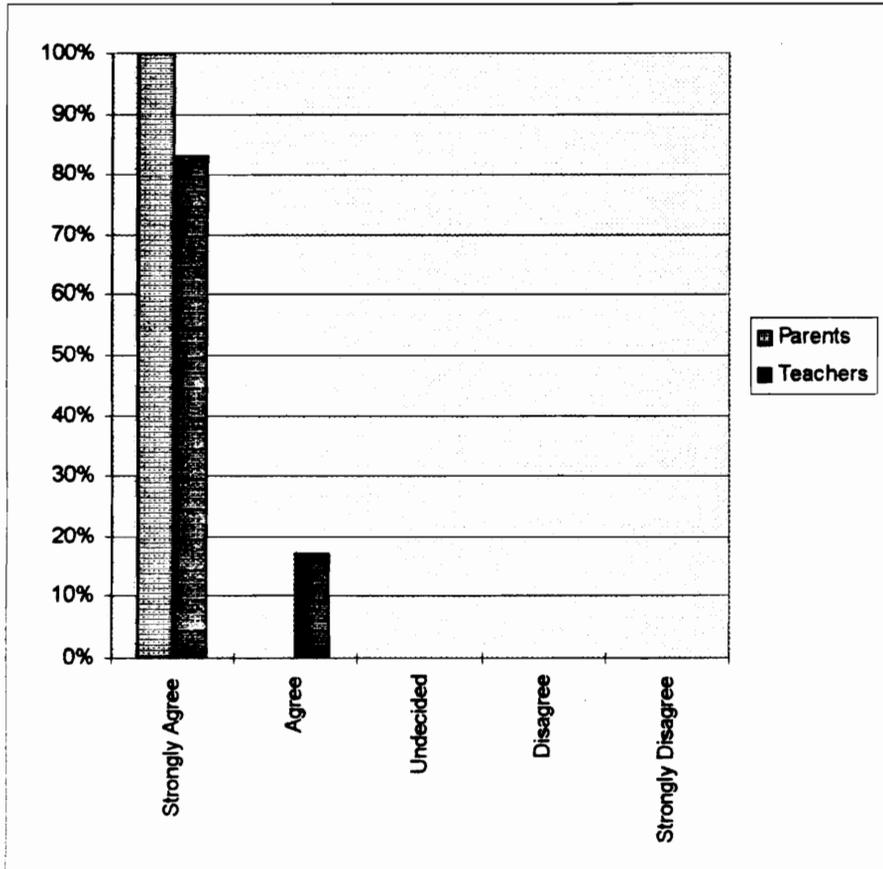


Figure 5. Team Effort. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 83 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 17 percent agreed that they worked towards achieving team goals. One hundred percent of the parents strongly agreed that they worked towards achieving team goals.

6. The team had an effective facilitator.

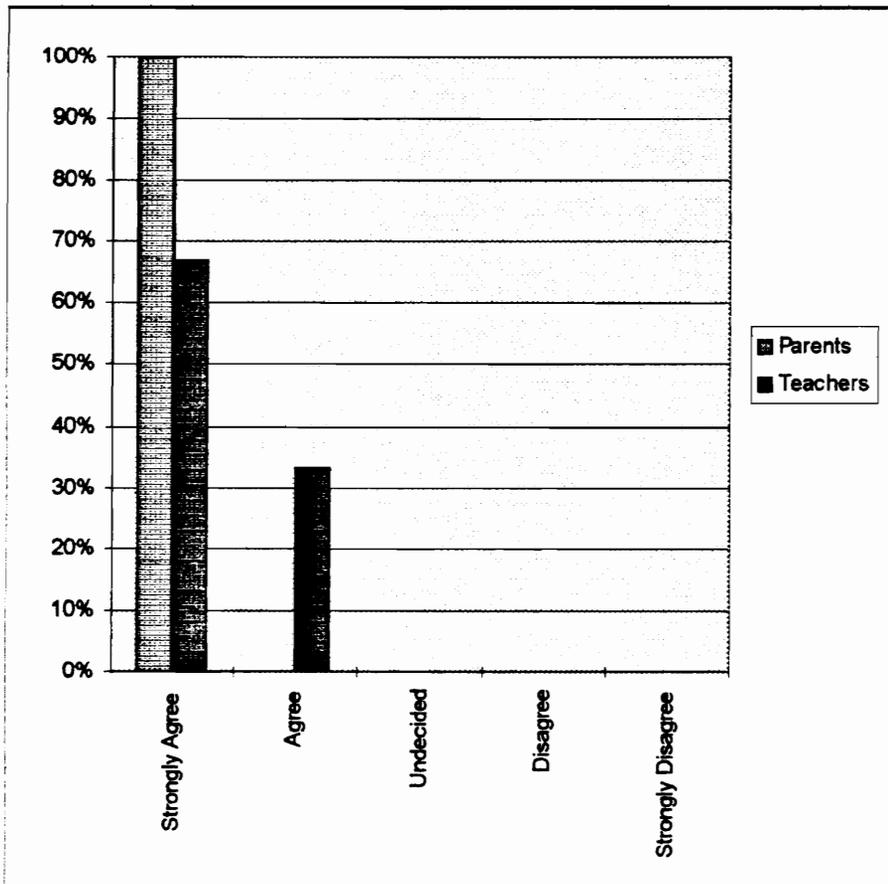


Figure 6. Facilitator Effectiveness. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 67 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed that the team had an effective facilitator. One hundred percent of the parents strongly agreed that the team had an effective facilitator.

7. Team members were free to express their ideas and opinions.

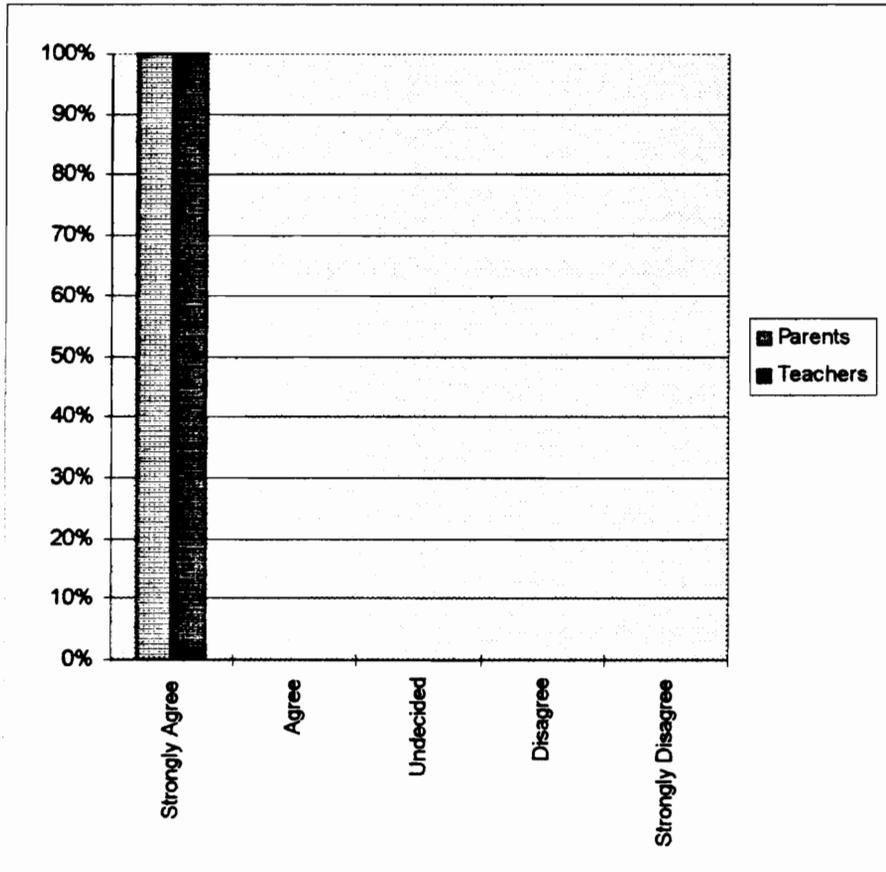


Figure 7. Team Member Self-Expression. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 100 percent of the teachers and 100 percent of the parents strongly agreed that team members were free to express their ideas and opinions.

8. Team members encouraged, supported and praised one another in their efforts and contributions.

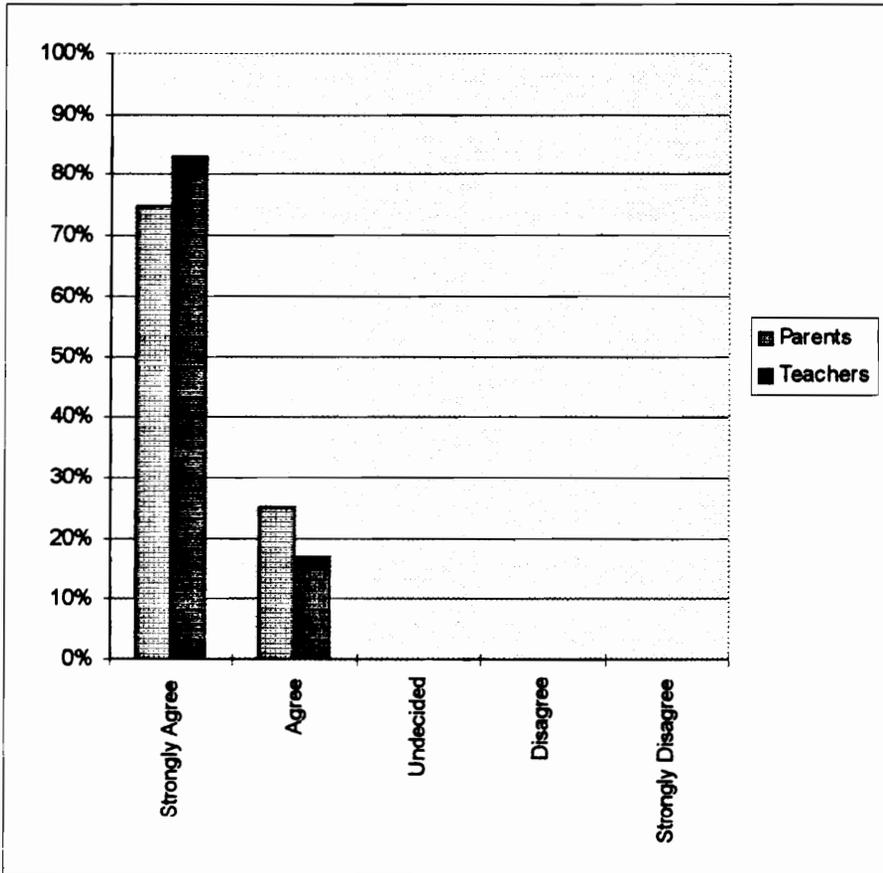


Figure 8. Team Support and Praise. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 83 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 17 percent agreed that team members encouraged, supported and praised one another in their efforts and contributions. Seventy-five percent of the parents strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that team members encouraged, supported and praised one another in their efforts and contributions.

9. High expectations were demonstrated throughout the project.

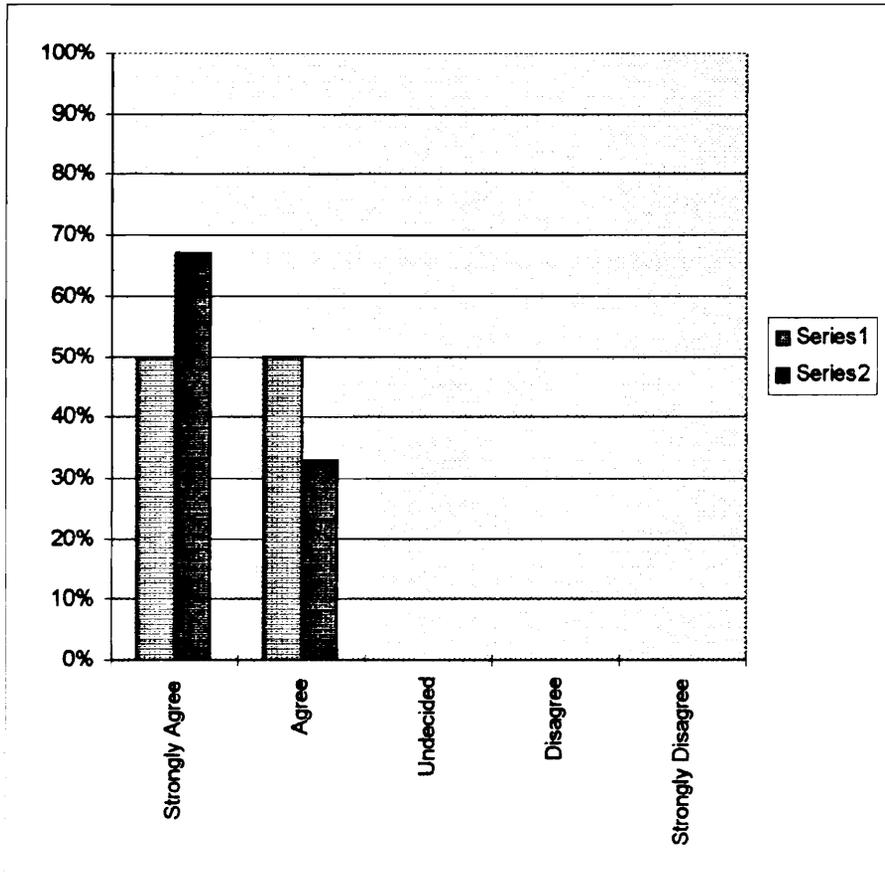


Figure 9. Team Expectation. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 67 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 17 percent agreed that high expectations were demonstrated throughout the project. Fifty percent of the parents strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed that high expectations were demonstrated throughout the project.

10. The “Action Research Process” is a good approach to problem solving.

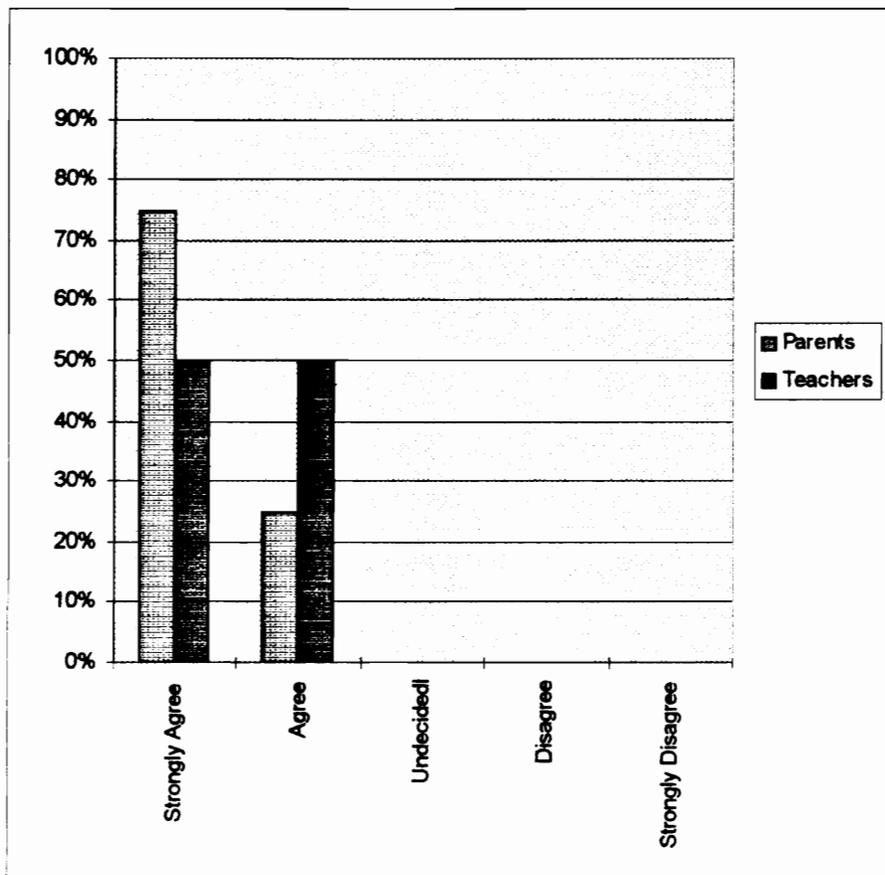


Figure 10. Action Research Team Methodology. Of the six teacher and four parent participants surveyed, 50 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed that the “Action Research Process” is a good approach to problem solving. Seventy-five percent of the parents strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed that the “Action Research Process” is a good approach to problem solving.

SUMMARY

A summary of the findings for this chapter are presented on the following pages.

Chart A, "Establishing a Social Bond" and Chart B, "Developing Teamwork" reviews themes relating to the team dynamics aspect of the action research process. Chart A lists issues that had to be dealt with during the preliminary stages of team development. Failure to deal with these seemingly minor issues such as seating arrangements and creating belongingness, could have derailed the team building process in its preliminary stages. In addition, Chart A also includes suggestions on how to deal with these issues to foster the team bonding process. Chart B lists issues that affect basic team dynamics and are required to be constantly reinforced throughout the teaming process. Chart C, "Facilitating the Process," lists the role of the facilitator; advantages of having a facilitator; advantages and disadvantages of the principal as facilitator, and the separation of roles-- principal as facilitator. Chart D, "The Action Research Process," provides a brief overview of the action research process employed in this study. Johnson's Action Research Process, includes the following steps: orientation to the action research process, incorporating team building strategies; identification of a focus area; investigation of researched literature; determination of data needed and development of data collection instruments; aggregation of data; organization, analysis and interpretation of data; formation of action plan and implementation of strategies; and evaluation, reflection and celebration of strategies and accomplishments. Chart E, "Team Reactions" to the action research process lists

participant reactions to the action research process before and after the process was completed. Chart E also lists some advantages and disadvantages of the process.

CHART A
Establishing a Social Bond

Theme	Observation	Possible Solutions
Getting Acquainted	Teachers and parents needed time to get to know one another , relax and wind down before beginning business portion of meeting.	Allot ten minutes at the beginning of each meeting for teachers and parents to mingle, talk, and enjoy refreshments.
Seating Arrangements	Teachers sat with teachers and parents with parents.	Assign seats--alternating parents and teachers. The teacher and parent from each grade level may sit and work together as buddies.
Creating Belongingness	Noticeable laughter and communication between teachers, parents very quiet.	Talk with parents, let them know their time and effort is appreciated. Create moments in meetings where information is needed from a parent perspective.
Questioning Credentials	Teachers questioning parents abilities and comprehension; parents questioning their abilities	Provide opportunities for recognition for all members. Give plenty of praise for effort and for activities completed.
Dealing with Disagreements and conflicts	Difficulty coming to a consensus	Present opinions in a positive tone of voice. Listen to the pros and cons. Solicit opinions and suggestion from all participants. Provide additional research concerning an issue.
Domination of Dialogue	Teachers dominated most of the conversations.	Leader solicits parent's opinions. Leader assists timid members in explaining ideas.
Team Sensitivity-- Words and Actions	Lack of attention; inappropriate choice of words	Leader directs member back on task on the present objective. Leader discounted inappropriate words without focusing on them.

CHART B
Developing Teamwork

Theme	Purpose	Possible Solutions
Defining and Establishing Teamwork	To have participants on one accord.	Discuss ground rules for the survival of the group to work together such as: importance of having everyone to participate; sharing of the workload, being polite, courteous and positive; flexible, being a good listener; and the sharing of a common goal.
Team Building Activities	To develop bonding among participants; to develop team guidelines for effective meetings.	Execute the following team building activities: "Getting To Know You," "What Makes an Effective Team," "Building Consensus."
Modeling of Good Team Building Skills: Parents, Teachers and the Facilitator.	To establish a positive team spirit; adherence to rules established by team; enhance proper meeting decorum by all participants.	The facilitator: recognized each participant's suggestions and ideas; praised participants for contributions; strived to keep everyone on a positive note; refocused team on task; listened for consensus of group on issues requiring decisions. Teachers and parents identified effective team building characteristics.
Establishing Trust	To develop bonding and cohesiveness.	Respect everyone's opinion; follow team identified list of "What makes an Effective Team,"
Achieving Consensus	To obtain support from all members on issues requiring decision making.	Brainstorm to obtain many views and opinions; gently persuading the need for all members to buy into need for agreement.
Working as a team	To establish team bonding and team spirit.	Share the workload: completion of task; no one person felt overwhelmed; many ideas were presented.

CHART C
Facilitating the Process

Role of the Facilitator	Commenced each meeting; explained the role of members and non-participant observer; explained data collection procedure; train participants on the action research process; introduced team building strategies; praised participants for their contributions; and assumed the role of silent observer as the meeting ensued.
Advantages and of having a facilitator	Kept the group on task; provided suggestions to get discussions started; made certain team building skills were practiced.
The principal as facilitator	Advantages: Knew what needed to be accomplished; had an overview of entire program; Disadvantages: presence of an element of authority.
Separation of roles--Principal as facilitator	Participants' opinions mixed. Participants viewed principal as leader; however they made the final decisions.

CHART D
The Action Research Process

Steps	Objective	Strategies
Orientation to the "Action Research Process" and Team Building Strategies	To establish the purpose and function of the process. To develop bonding among team members.	Overview given of the process; discuss each step of the process; explained journalizing; determined meeting dates; length of sessions and number of sessions. Team building strategies implemented.
Identification of a focus area	To establish area of interest and develop goals.	Facilitator provided synopsis of identified area and parameters. Team identifies domains of interest.
Investigation of the Researched Literature	To expand the knowledge base of each team member.	Facilitator and team members researched and reviewed literature pertaining to focus area.
Determination of Data Needed and Development of Data Collection Instruments	To decide upon the type of data required and to develop the instrument.	The team reviewed existing school data to determine the data needed to meet their goals. Various types of data collection instruments were reviewed: surveys, interviews and questionnaires.
Aggregation of Data	To gather opinions and responses from the target population.	Data collection instruments were developed: Parent Compact and a Parent Survey.
Organization, Analysis and Interpretation of Data	To arrange data in a manner that lends itself to examination and interpretation.	Teachers in each grade or department collected the compacts, surveys and tallied results. Results given to team members. Data analyzed and interpreted.

CHART D
The Action Research Process
 --continued--

Steps	Objectives	Strategies
Formation of Action Plan and Implementation of Strategies	To develop, present and implement a unified plan of action.	<p>Strategy 1: Team developed plan and prioritized action steps. An analysis of the data revealed a lack of parenting workshops. Parents overwhelmingly showed interest in a parenting workshop on "Positive Discipline."</p> <p>Strategy 2: A workshop was presented. A parent information board was displayed in the front lobby to make parents aware of student and teacher accomplishments and to inform parents of various educational and community services.</p>
Evaluation, Reflection and Celebration of Strategies and Accomplishments	To recognize team accomplishments.	<p>The facilitator, team members, faculty and parents, reflected, praised and applauded achievements. Certificates were given to participants indicating participation on the action research team and participation in the process.</p>

CHART E
The Action Research Process
Team Reactions

<p>Pre-reactions of Team Members: Apprehension about expectations, involvement of administrator and the amount of time required to meet objectives.</p>	<p>Post-reactions of Team Members: Lost of skepticism; use of model was successful; useful process that allows systematic steps to approach a problem.</p>
<p>Advantages of Action Research Process: Solved a problem in an organized systematic manner; provided opportunities for brainstorming; encouraged opposing sides to work together on a common goal; process promoted a positive working atmosphere and provided feedback from the target population.</p>	<p>Disadvantage of Action Research Process: Very time consuming.</p>

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study examined team interaction utilizing the action research process to study parental involvement at Crewe Primary School. The purpose of this study was to observe a team's interpersonal relationships, study the principal's role, and describe the team's perceptions of the action research process. The team was originally composed of six parents, six teachers, a teacher who served as a non-participant observer, and the principal who served as the facilitator. Parent and teacher team members reflected an equal representation of grades pre-kindergarten through second grade, including the special education and Title I school programs. However, during the course of the process, two parent participants had to relinquish team membership because of employment issues.

Participants were assigned responsibilities within the team, and ground rules governing team conduct were established. Team members were expected to be active participants in each session and were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions throughout each phase of the process. The non-participant observer recorded meeting proceedings and team member interaction from the sidelines. Twenty, two-hour sessions were utilized to complete the action research process during the time period September 23, 1996 through May 5, 1997.

Team members maintained reflective journals where they recorded reactions and impressions weekly. The researcher kept field notes of observations of team interactions as

participants worked through the action research process. Teacher participants informed co-workers on a regular basis of the progress of the action research team. Grade and departmental meetings were held with non-team school staff members to answer questions about the project. Teachers and parents were kept abreast of actions taken by the action team and their assistance was sought at various stages of the process.

Various data collection mechanisms such as: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were utilized to solicit targeted process feedback from team participants. Data collected was quantified and analyzed in order to draw specific inferences concerning the success of and possible improvements to the action research process. Analytical results of data analysis were provided to all team participants. This study focused on the evolution of working relationships in an action research team, the role of the principal as facilitator, and the team's perception of the advantages and disadvantages of the action research process.

Team Evolution

Initially, the researcher observed a reluctance on the part of team members to intermingle with one another. During the first few sessions, team members sat in homogeneous groups that appeared to reflect a "squaring-off" of teachers against parents. Interaction was established within the homogeneous groups with dominate dialogue flowing from the teacher participants. Parent participants quietly observed team dynamics

while interjecting very little into team discussions. From a facilitator's point-of-view, there appeared to be a lack of communication between the two groups because of individual perceptions of professional expertise and educational level. Parent participants displayed visible reluctance to express opinions and concerns.

Team building strategies were utilized to establish a cohesiveness among team members, and to increase communication. Initially, team meetings began with informal discussions during which refreshments were served. Team participants were allowed to relax and socialize. It was the researcher's opinion that this proved to be beneficial to the team culture and working environment. These ten-minute sessions established an atmosphere of relaxed cooperation and mental synchronization among team members.

Ice breakers were also employed to acquaint team members. Personal information such as individual backgrounds, hobbies, family members and personal interests were solicited from team members. In addition, structured team building activities were utilized to create team cohesiveness and facilitate decision making among team members. The team jointly developed criteria for what they considered made an effective team. These were in actuality ground rules or a code of conduct that governed all subsequent team sessions.

Results of a survey conducted at the end of the research study in May, 1997, indicated that participants had established an effective working relationship that reflected a cohesiveness among team members. When surveyed on team communication, 90 percent

of team participants strongly agreed that communication among team members was respectful, open, and honest; 10 percent agreed. Seventy percent of team participants strongly agreed that decisions affecting the team were made through consensus; 30 percent agreed. One hundred percent of team participants strongly agreed that they felt free to express their ideas and opinions. Eighty percent strongly agreed that team members encouraged, supported, and praised one another in their efforts and contributions; 20 percent agreed.

The researcher concluded that working relationships can be directly influenced during the action research process by the introduction of team building strategies. Bonding can be encouraged among disassociated individuals with differing educational perspectives so that they are able to come together in consensus and accomplish desired outcomes.

Principal as Facilitator

Teacher and parent participants seemed very aware of the importance of the facilitator in the action research process. The facilitator's role involved officiating at the beginning of team meetings, soliciting consensus on agenda topics, and keeping team members focused on issues being discussed. The principal served as facilitator of the action research process because of the limited financial resources to hire a consultant, and also because of the administrator's facilitation expertise and understanding of the action research process.

During the study, the facilitator's role varied. The facilitator was instrumental in establishing an atmosphere of inclusion among team members, ensuring rules were abided by, and making certain necessary resources and materials were available for each session. Meeting coordination was the responsibility of the facilitator. Team members seemed satisfied with the facilitation process. Team members felt having the principal as facilitator was a good choice. This was evident from the results of a survey on team effectiveness. Results of a survey conducted at the end of the research study indicated that team members became comfortable with the principal's role as facilitator. When surveyed on facilitator effectiveness, 80 percent of team participants strongly agreed that the action research team had an effective facilitator; 20 percent agreed.

The researcher felt that there were both advantages and disadvantages to having the principal assume the role of team facilitator. Some advantages of having the principal as facilitator included: (1) establishing an opportunity for more personal working relationships with teacher participants; (2) gaining insight into teacher participant strengths for future developmental opportunities; (3) enhancing team credibility; (4) providing first-hand knowledge of parent perceptions; (5) fostering staff and parent commitment; (6) encouraging team focus; and (7) enhancing parent/teacher/principal communication. Some disadvantages of having the principal assume the team facilitation role included: (1) creating a reluctance on the part of team members to openly express differences of

opinion; (2) having the principal viewed as the authority figure of the team; and (3) creating distrust among team participants concerning the principal's motives.

The researcher acknowledges that there are inherent limitations in assuming the role of both researcher and facilitator. A facilitator's primary role is to view and react to team dynamics. This includes reacting to interpersonal relationships, team focus, and team participation. Attempting to view and record team observations distracts from the facilitator's primary focus, making it difficult to assume both roles.

Most often team facilitation is performed by parties who are removed enough from a process so as to encourage unbiased, objective facilitation. Because of a principal's stake in school-related issues, objectivity may be compromised. However, the advantages gained by having someone knowledgeable of team members, community issues, and political constraints, far out-weigh the disadvantages which may be introduced into the process. It is this researcher's opinion that within committees in the school, facilitation skills should be encouraged and developed. "Home-grown" expertise encourages a flow of fresh ideas within an organization.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Action Research Process

Teacher and parent participants initially expressed anxiety about the action research process. Initial concern was expressed about understanding the process, its usefulness and expectations. Teachers felt the main disadvantage of the process was that it

was too time-consuming. This was probably because all meetings were scheduled immediately at the end of school day. Teachers and parents felt that an advantage of using the action research process was that it allowed for an organized and systematic review of an issue, the development of a specific plan of action, the implementation of strategies, and the evaluation of results. Participants also felt that the process promoted a positive working atmosphere and encouraged flexibility.

Team reaction to the process became more favorable after the implementation of the first action step. Familiarity with process methodologies and expectations increased the comfort level of team participants. Results of a survey conducted at the end of the research study indicated that the team' comfort level was favorable. Seventy percent of participants surveyed strongly agreed that they felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process; 30 percent agreed. Sixty percent of team participants surveyed strongly agreed that high expectations were demonstrated throughout the process; 40 percent agreed. Sixty percent of team participants surveyed strongly agreed that the action research process was a good approach to problem solving; 40 percent agreed. As noted, survey results were one form of data collection that was relied upon to determine team reaction to various aspects of the action research process. The researcher utilized surveys that solicited narrative responses and surveys that solicited more targeted, quantitative responses. Both types of surveys were necessary in order to gain a well-rounded perspective on the process.

Based on an evaluation of surveys and journal entries, it appeared that team participants were less likely to write full explanations or opinions regarding the process in their personal journals, and more likely to express opinions on survey questions. It is the researcher's opinion that open-ended questionnaires afforded team participants the opportunity to respond more specifically to questions regarding team interpersonal relations, facilitation, and the action research process. It is this researcher's opinion that teacher participants felt it provided more anonymity. For teacher participants, the role of the principal as facilitator seemingly enhanced their need to be able to respond anonymously to certain issues.

Based on the feedback from team participants and team results, Crewe Primary School will utilize the action research process for future problem solving. Recommendations formulated by the action research team continue to be implemented in school operations involving parental involvement. Teacher participants will be utilized on various school renewal committees in the "train-the-trainer" methodology. Teacher participants will train members of other teams on the utilization of the action research process. Parental participation will also be encouraged on subsequent action research teams. Two parent participants are presently members of school renewal committees. Parent participants continue to volunteer in all aspects of school activities. As a result of being informed on the action research team and its accomplishments during the parent workshop on "Positive Discipline" in May, 1997, a number of parents have volunteered to

participate on future action research teams. It is the researcher's opinion that the action research process itself has encouraged parental involvement at Crewe Primary School.

As the researcher and team participant, I would recommend the action research process not only because the process is systematic and thorough, but because it also promotes cooperation among team members. The research aspect of the action research process encourages the assimilation of information to the focus area. Pre-conceived notions are either proved or disproved by research supporting specific areas. Action research promotes team building and team work among stakeholders that produce positive working relationships in both the school and the school community. The action research process is a viable tool for problem-solving in the educational process.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was limited in that it was a case study of one school in a rural district. Other studies should focus on using the Action Research Process to study issues in an urban school setting focusing on the evolution of relations of a team, the facilitator and what members perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of the process.

An in-depth study should be conducted on the role, responsibilities and participation level of participants on a team. Another area of focus which should be studied is the external and internal constraints on team members and how they are contained or alleviated and how this effects the accomplishments of goals. The effects of team building strategies on team members and how it influences teamwork could be determined by further research. An identification of team participants' background, experiences, values, learning styles and their effects on the working conditions of an action research team warrants further investigation.

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APPENDIX A

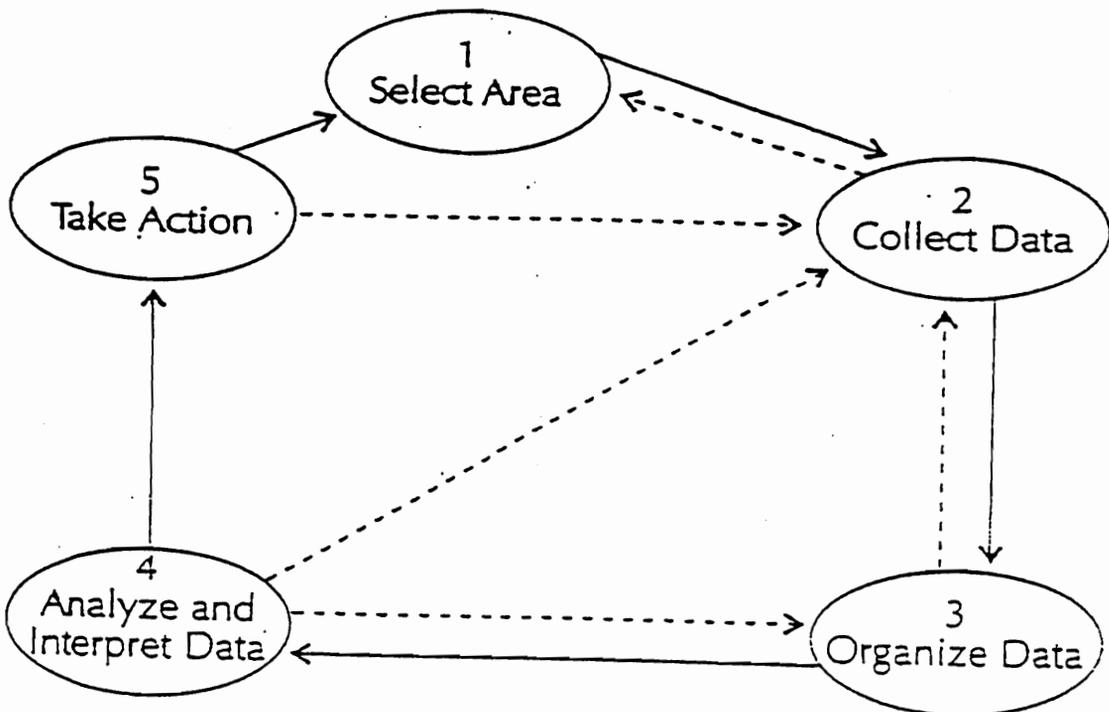


Figure . Calhoun's Model of the action research cycle, by Emily Calhoun, 1994, How to use action research in the self-renewing school, p. 2, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

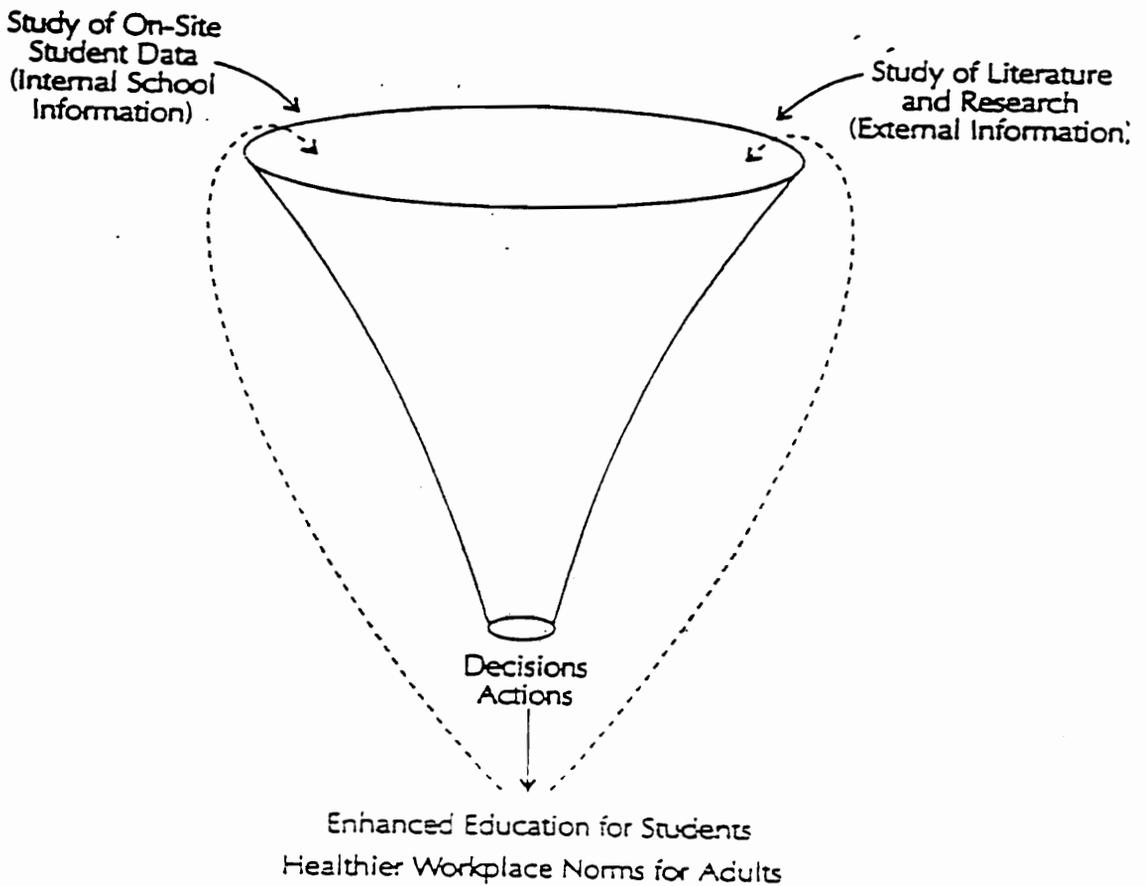
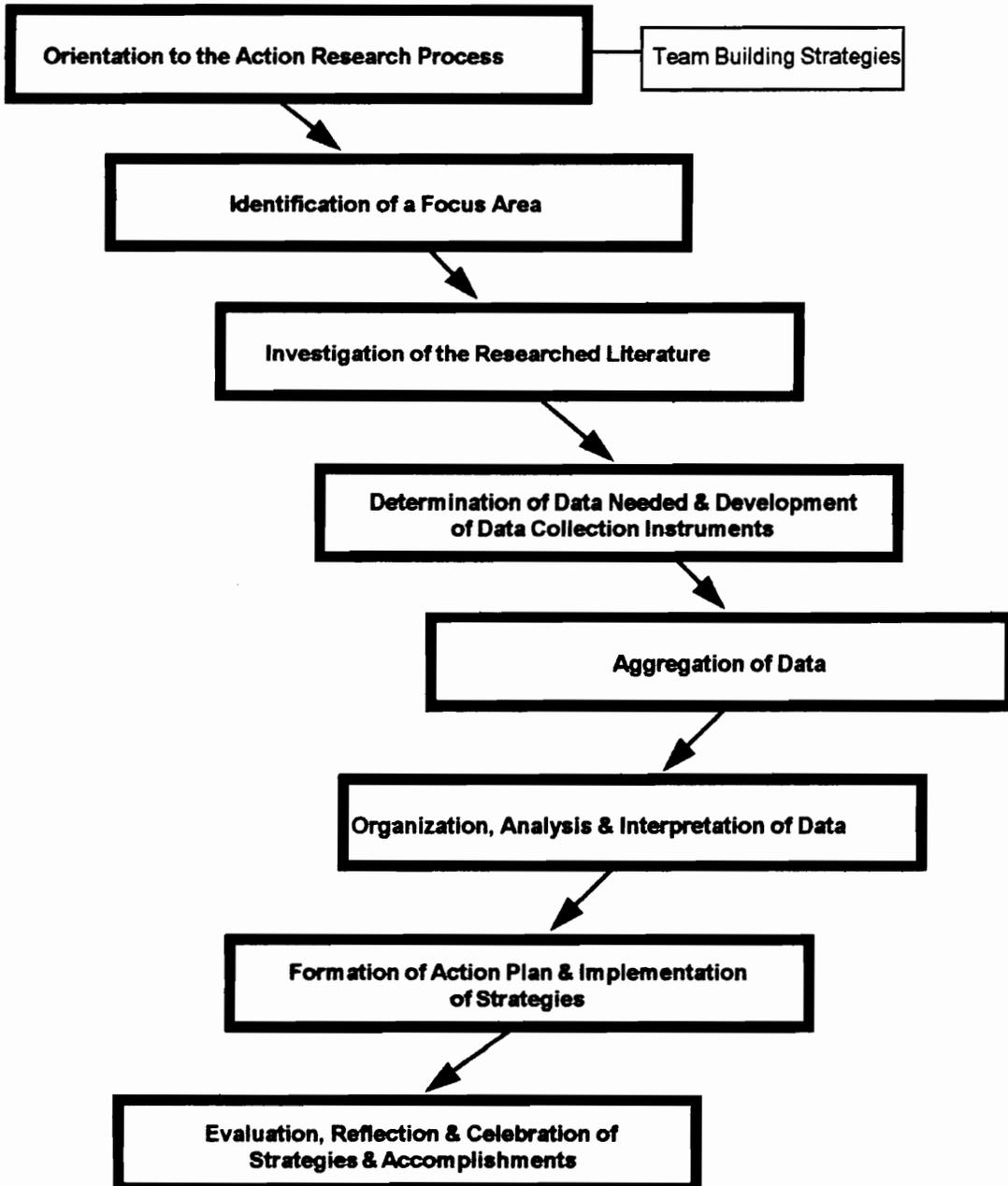


Figure . Calhoun's model of an action research funnel: mixing internal and external information, by Emily Calhoun, 1994, How to use action research in the self-renewing school, p 3, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

Johnson's Action Research Model



APPENDIX D

CREWE PRIMARY SCHOOL
SCHOOL/PARENT/STUDENT COMPACT

Student's Name _____ Date _____

1. School's/Teacher's Responsibilities

1. Shall provide high quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective environment.
2. Shall take into consideration individual student strengths and needs.
3. Shall send progress reports home weekly.
4. Shall provide parents with learning strategies to use at home.
5. Shall schedule at least one parent-teacher conference a year, and as needed.
6. Shall schedule parent meeting with due consideration to parent/family needs.

Teacher _____ Date _____

II. Parent's Responsibilities: (Check ___ 1-12)

- _____ Read together often
- _____ Monitor school attendance
- _____ Volunteer in child's school or classroom
- _____ Ask teachers for learning strategies
- _____ Express high expectations/offer praise and

encouragement

- Use the public library/Parent Media Center
- Establish a daily family routine
- Talk with your child/review school activities
- Attend parent meetings
- Use TV wisely
- Be a positive role model for your child
- Monitor out of school activities

Parent _____ Date _____

III. Student's Responsibilities: (Check ___ 1-8)

- Complete homework assignments
- Attend school regularly
- Follow school rules
- Show respect for parents and teachers
- Read often
- Use TV wisely
- Be a good messenger between school and home
- Use problem-solving/decision making skills
(think before you act)

Student _____ Date _____

CREWE PRIMARY SCHOOL

PARENT SURVEY

The Crewe Primary School Action Team has been working on ways to increase parental participation in the school. We feel that increased parental participation in a child's education will lead to greater student success in school. In order to develop strategies designed to increase parental involvement we need to know what you think. Your time and participation in completing this survey will be greatly appreciated.

I. Student/School Activities

Please check the student/school activities in which you do participate, would like to participate or can not participate.

	Do	would like to	can not
	<u>Participate</u>	<u>Participate</u>	<u>Participate</u>
A. Parent/Teacher			
<u>Conference</u>			
B. Help with			
<u>Homework</u>			
C. Read to or			
<u>with child</u>			
D. P.T.A.			
<u>Meetings</u>			

E. School

Activities

F. Volunteer in

School (tutor)

G. Donate

Materials

H. Use Media

Center

I. Review Student's

"Success Report"

J. Review Student's

"Report Card"

II. Reason for Participation

Research indicates that parents participate in their child's education or school activities for various reasons. Please check reasons you participate.

- A. _____ Parent participation is important.
- B. _____ My participation will help my child succeed in school.
- C. _____ Teachers respond and react more positively to my child when I participate.
- D. _____ My participation keeps me informed of what and how my child is doing in school.
- E. _____ Teachers make me feel welcome.

- F. _____ The principal and staff make me feel welcome.
- G. _____ My child was participating in a program.
- H. _____ Other _____

III. Barriers

Research indicates several reasons why parents find it difficult to participate in their child's education or school activities as they would like. Please check reasons why you may find it difficult to participate.

- A. _____ do not have transportation
- B. _____ do not have child care
- C. _____ can not take off from work
- D. _____ uncomfortable with teacher(s)
- E. _____ uncomfortable with principal or staff
- F. _____ uncomfortable with subject matter
- g. _____ no one asked me
- h. _____ not interested
- i. _____ other _____

IV. Workshops and Programs

To increase the partnership between parents, students and school, Crewe Primary School would like to offer workshops and programs that you want. Please check the items that interest you.

- A. _____ Cooking Nutritious Meals
- B. _____ How to Help My Child with Homework
- C. _____ Parent Resource/Media Centers
- D. _____ Investment and Saving Opportunities
- E. _____ Positive Discipline
- F. _____ How to Deal with Stress
- G. _____ Time Management
- H. _____ Learning Styles
- I. _____ Learning Problems
- J. _____ Other _____

V. When would you like workshops held?

- A. _____ in the morning during school (9:00-10:30 A.M.)
- B. _____ after school (4:00-5:00 P.M.)
- C. _____ evening (7:00-8:00 P.M.)

APPENDIX D

**THE ACTION TEAM
TEAM EFFECTIVENESS**

For each item below, express your level of agreement with the statement by circling the corresponding number. (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree).

1. The action team was focused on its purpose and goals.

1 2 3 4 5

2. As a team member, I felt comfortable using the steps of the action research process.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Communication between team members was respectful, open and honest.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Decisions effecting the team were made through consensus.

1 2 3 4 5

5. As a team member, I worked towards achieving team goals.

1 2 3 4 5

6. The team had an effective facilitator.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Team members were free to express their ideas and opinions.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Team members encouraged, supported and praised one another in their efforts and contributions.

1 2 3 4 5

9. High expectations were demonstrated throughout the project.

1 2 3 4 5

10. The "Action Research Process" is a good approach to problem-solving.

1 2 3 4 5

VITA

VITA

Yvonne O. Reynolds-Johnson
Route 3 Box 121, Blackstone, Virginia 23824

EDUCATION:

Ed. D., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Blacksburg, Virginia
Major: Educational Administration

M.S. 1986, Longwood College. Major: Elementary Education

B. S. 1968, Saint Paul's College. Major: Elementary Education

CERTIFICATION:

Virginia Postgraduate Professional Certificate Endorsements: Elementary
Principal,
Director of Instruction, Elementary Supervisor, General Supervisor, Assistant
Superintendent for Instruction, and 1-7 Elementary Grades.

CERTIFICATE OF LICENSE:

1996, Licensed Minister: Associate Minister, Mount Bethel Baptist Church
Kenbridge, Virginia 23944

EXPERIENCE:

1993-Present
Principal, Crewe Primary School, Nottoway County Public Schools.

1991-1993
Principal, Blackstone Intermediate School, Nottoway County Public Schools.

1991-1973
Elementary Teacher, Nottoway County Public Schools.

1973-1968

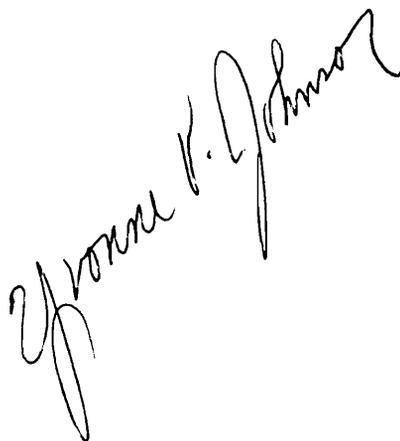
Chapter I Reading Teacher, Nottoway County Public Schools.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Phi Delta Kappa

Virginia Association Elementary School Principals

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ronald K. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is oriented diagonally across the page.