


**THE PROCESS OF INVOLVING FAMILIES IN THEIR
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY**


By


Say Fook Foo

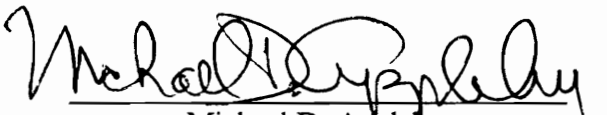
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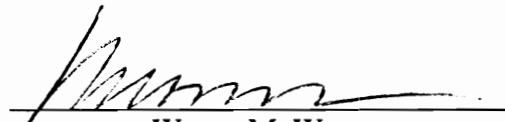
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(ABSTRACT)

Three decades of research have shown that family involvement improves children's learning. Schools that help families feel welcome and show them how to improve learning both at school and at home are likely to have more support from parents and the community. It was the intent of this study to examine how exemplary family involvement programs and initiatives were put into place in an elementary school in Virginia.

The sources of evidence collected in the course of the 20 visits in this study were interviews, direct observations, and documentation. The research was conducted within components describing: (1) ways to get families from all social and ethnic backgrounds in the local community to participate in the school and at home, (2) the impact of policies on family involvement practices, (3) the effects of family involvement, (4) resources needed to promote and enhance family involvement initiatives, and (5) leadership in promoting family involvement in the school.

People representing different segments of the population were identified and

interviewed. Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members who were knowledgeable about family involvement were interviewed. Separate sets of framing questions were formulated for central office administrative staff and the principal, teachers, parents and community members. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The investigator also attended and observed family involvement events in the school and reviewed documents related to family involvement during the data collection period.

Interview transcripts and observational notes were corroborated with evidence from document reviews. The investigator used a text management program, ASKSAM, to facilitate the identification and generation of themes in this study. The investigator integrated the computer-based and manual data analyses so that the advantages of each method were used.

The results of this study indicated that when the principal, with the cooperation of teachers, provided the type of school culture that made parents feel welcome in the school, the parents could provide the essential leadership that would lead to improvements in educational opportunities for their children. Resources, in terms of funding and staffing, were a prerequisite to getting “hard-to-reach” parents to participate in their children’s education. The findings of this study also indicated that family involvement at the governance and decision-making level is relatively low.

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Study

Introduction

That family involvement in education is important is not a new idea. Two decades of research findings have indicated that children have an advantage in school when their parents encourage and support school activities (Epstein, 1987). Almost all the major reports on education of the 1980's recommend family involvement as a high priority (A Nation at Risk, 1983; A Nation Prepared, 1986). Most of the recent calls for educational reform in public schools have further cited family involvement as a key factor for children's success (Chavkin, 1987; Riley, 1994). Family involvement means different things to different people. However, effective family involvement initiatives should acknowledge the fact that parents are a child's earliest and most influential teachers (Riley, 1994). In order to continue in this role, parents must continue to be involved with the schools, and schools must continue to reach out to parents. As Epstein (1991) puts it, "Trying to educate the young without help and support from the home is akin to trying to rake leaves in a high wind" (p.339).

The overlapping influence from the theoretical perspective suggests that school and family must share major responsibilities for children's learning and development. Berger (1991) stresses that schools already have an exceedingly difficult task, but their task will be made easier when a true parent-teacher-community alliance occurs. The

emphasis here is on achieving greater balance between the home and the school as partners in the education of children. A review of literature suggests that those family involvement activities work best when parents and teachers cooperatively plan instruction that can be carried out at home (Capper, 1993).

Epstein's (1993) research shows that when schools do not take the initiative to involve parents, the education of the parents and family social class help to decide who gets involved. However, these two factors tend to decrease or disappear as important factors when schools commit themselves to family involvement and find ways to improve it. It is with this awareness that schools must take the initiatives to reach out to families, particularly in schools that serve urban, poor, minority, educationally disadvantaged, or culturally diverse students and families. Family involvement initiatives must include those families that schools consider "hard-to-reach." Such families have increasing difficulty in helping their children with academics in the developmental process as children advance in their education (Lee & Croninger, 1994).

Epstein's model of family involvement

Joyce Epstein , a principal research scientist at the Johns Hopkins University, has been conducting research on family involvement for over a decade. Epstein (1991) has identified six types of family involvement that go far beyond that of encouraging parents to read with their children and to become volunteers at schools. This taxonomy was utilized as a foundation to establish groundwork for discussion in this study.

The six types of involvement proposed by Epstein are:

1. providing for the needs of children where the school helps parents create supportive learning environments at home,
2. responding to communications from the school where the school contacts parents about school programs and students' progress through effective communication,
3. participating at school refers to family involvement at school where the school recruits and organizes parental help,
4. participating in learning activities at home where schools provide ideas to parents on how to help their children with learning activities at home,
5. participating in the community and the governing of the school where schools recruit and train parents as leaders (see also Collins, 1993), and
6. collaboration between school and community where they share some responsibility for children's development and success.

Statement of the problem

Most of the reports and recommendations do not indicate how schools with exemplary family programs have involved family members in the educational process of their children. Replicating exemplary family involvement programs from other schools or school districts to one's own local district or school site needs some careful planning. Evidence from the literature also suggests that the limitation on collaboration between

schools and the “hard-to-reach” families are real and serious.

Most parents need help in knowing how to be productively involved in their children’s education. It is evident that meaningful family involvement results in improved student achievement, attendance, motivation, self-esteem and behavior of the students. The benefits of school-family partnerships are evident, yet family involvement in school programs and activities remain rare. Who should take the first move? Can schools successfully involve all parents in their children’s education, especially those parents who would not become involved on their own?

Family involvement is taken for granted by many of us. Parental efforts often receive little recognition by the schools. Educators generally agree that involving parents in the educational process is part and parcel of the school’s mission. However, when administrators from school administration offices or principals are questioned about their budgetary commitments to promote family involvement, the discussion tends to become somewhat evasive.

Demographic changes in this country have made connections between school and home more complicated. Parents from two-income families often cite the lack of time as the obstacle to participate in their children’s education. Low income families in both rural and urban settings want to be involved in their children’s schooling, but they often have neither the time nor energy to participate. Under many of these scenarios, disadvantaged families struggle with limited time and resources. They need understandable and useful information about how to help their children at home to

become more successful in school (Black, 1993; Epstein, 1988).

Research questions

The main focus of this study was to examine a school to determine the process of involving families. It was the intent of this study to answer the following exploratory research questions.

1. How does a school get families to participate in their children's education?
2. How are family involvement initiatives geared toward the hard-to-reach families?
3. How do family involvement policies at school and classroom levels impact family involvement initiatives?
4. How do parents, teachers, and the administrators perceive the effects of school-family partnerships?
5. Who provides leadership in the development of family involvement initiatives?
6. What resources do the school and the district provide to promote family involvement?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to look at the process of how the family involvement programs and initiatives at Sandusky Elementary School were put into place. The components that were included in the discussion of the process include:

leadership, impact of policy on involvement, effect of family involvement, and the availability of resources to promote and enhance family involvement. The findings of this study can be used to help officials from state departments of education, state boards, principals, and teachers to work effectively with families and communities so that education becomes a shared venture.

Significance of the study

This study can have an impact on plans to improve teacher and administrator education and training. Administrators and teachers need to become skilled in family involvement and thus need specialized training. Family involvement has a strong basis in research and practice; however, family involvement does not seem to have fully entered the mainstream of teacher education (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Radcliffe, Malone, & Nathan, 1994). The most significant barrier Greenwood and Hickman (1991) have identified is the lack of knowledge teachers and administrators have about how to involve parents in their youngsters' education. In most teacher education and educational administration programs, parents are not discussed as partners with shared interests and responsibilities for education. There is little systematic or comprehensive education regarding connections of schools and families across the grades. Family involvement in schools needs to be clearly defined before administrators and teachers attempt to develop a family involvement program.

Research from the literature has shown that when family involvement programs

are well designed, they can have a positive effect on student achievement. Part of this case study is to find out how administrators, teachers and parents share their experiences in the family involvement initiatives. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will provide significant improvements in family-school partnerships at both district and school levels.

This study is part of the three-phase research project conducted by the Virginia Tech and partially funded by Virginia Department of Education. The Education Department has distributed a survey to all local division superintendents (Superintendent's Memorandum #194, 1993) asking for information on family involvement efforts in the local schools. Information on 281 schools located in 130 divisions was compiled, summarized, and reported in the form of a booklet entitled "Directory of Selected Programs of Parent/Community Involvement in Virginia."

Phase II of the above-mentioned project reviewed the literature on the effects of family involvement and the quality of education in communities across Virginia and the nation. Phase III focused on gaining a broader understanding of the effects of exemplary family involvement programs. The investigator in the project conducted a detailed case study to examine various aspects of family involvement.

It is also hoped that the recommendations from this study will provide a framework to guide administrators, teachers and parents by deciding the types of involvement programs or activities that are appropriate for local settings. This systematic approach will help educators to develop more workable programs of family

involvement, especially in home learning activities that would ultimately benefit the majority of our parents and their children.

Limitations of the study

The use of the investigator as a primary instrument in the investigation poses some limitations to the study. Another issue regarding the limitation of this study is the generalizability of the case findings. McClintock (1985) notes that "a common criticism of the case study is that it represents an N of 1" (p. 206). In this aspect, generalization in naturalistic inquiry should be viewed as something different from generalization from a sample to a population. If generalizations are to be made, they should be applied to the same situation where the study is drawn from.

Definition of terms

Family: The new definitions of involvement should go beyond the term parent. According to Davies (1991), "Family is a more encompassing term. The most significant adults in the lives of many children may be grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, or even neighbors who provide child care" (p.377). The meaning of family in this study will be synonymous with the definition given by Davies.

Family involvement: The definitions of involvement in this study go beyond having family members come to school to volunteer. Epstein's model (1991) of family

involvement, which includes all the contributions that families make to the education of their children, was used as a foundation for discussion in this study.

“Hard-to-reach” families: In this study, the term hard-to-reach families will be used synonymously with “at-risk” and disadvantaged families. It applies to the poor, who are often minorities. The common denominator for “hard-to-reach” families is poverty.

School-family partnerships: Partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, provide for on-going exchange of information, have an agreement on goals and strategies and sharing of responsibilities for the development of the child (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Organization of the study

Chapter one helps to put this study into perspective by addressing topics on the Epstein’s model of family involvement; statement of problem; research questions; purpose, significance, and limitation of the study; definitions of terms; and organization of the study. Chapter two presents a review of literature and research related to this study. Chapter three describes the process of arriving at the answers to the research questions. Chapter four documents the results of this findings. Chapter five consists of the discussion, conclusions, implication for practices, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

Reviews of literature on school-home partnerships have demonstrated consistently that family involvement is one of the keys to success in schools for children of all ages and types. This chapter covers specific topics on theoretical perspectives, family involvement and better outcomes, types of family involvement, barriers to family involvement, and leadership in family involvement initiatives.

Theoretical perspective

Research on school and family linkages are theoretically originated from the different perceptions on families, schools and children in society. These theoretical perspectives are mainly based on the separate responsibilities, sequenced responsibilities, and overlapping influence (Epstein, 1992).

The separate influence emphasizes that schools and families are most efficient and effective when their leaders maintain and pursue separate goals, standards, and activities. Under such a perspective, there is a clear distinction in responsibilities for institutions such as schools and families. According to Epstein (1992), such a model does not accommodate partnerships between schools and families. Schools may never contact parents unless the students have serious learning or behavior problems.

Under the sequenced-responsibilities model, parents and teachers take turns to play their roles and contribute to child development and education. Parents are perceived to have responsibility for the first critical stages of learning that prepare children for school. However, educators are obligated to assume major responsibility for the education of the school-aged child. Epstein (1992) argues that as more parents are involved in children's early education, they are unwilling to confine their influence only to early years or certain aspects of their children's development.

The third paradigm in the theoretical perspective is the idea of overlapping influence relationships between families and schools. This model is based on the notion that children's learning, development, and success are the main reasons for home and school partnerships (Epstein, 1992). Research on school and family connections have evolved from the studies of these two institutions as separate spheres of influence to the studies of overlapping spheres of influence. Most of the recent research has been designed to work on the effects of specific connections of schools and families on children.

Family involvement and better outcomes

There is little doubt that family involvement in education is directly related to significant increases in student achievement (Benson, Medrich & Buckley 1980; Becher, 1984; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Epstein, 1991; Clark, 1993; Henderson, 1994). Henderson and Berla (1994) have clearly pointed out the connection between

family participation and students' academic performance.

In fact, the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

1. create a home environment that encourages learning,
2. express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers,
3. become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (p. 1).

There are other important benefits of family participation in the schools. Many studies found that family involvement in education helped produce increases in student attendance and aspirations, improvement of student attitude and behavior, improvement in classroom and school climate, positive relationships between parents and teachers, positive parent-child communication, and more parent-community support of the school (Burns, 1993; Greenwood & Hickman, Chavkin, 1993; 1991; Black, 1993; Epstein, 1992).

In their book entitled A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement, Henderson and Berla (1994) summarized themes that have constantly emerged from the studies related to family involvement. The themes that appeared are as follows:

- First, the family makes critical contributions to student achievement, from earliest childhood through high school. Efforts to improve children's outcomes are much more effective if they encompass their families.
- Second, when parents are involved at school, not just at home, children do better in school and they stay in school longer.

- Third, when parents are involved at school, their children go to better schools.
- Fourth, children do best when their parents are enabled to play four key roles in their children's learning: teachers, supporters, advocates, and decision-makers.
- Fifth, the more the relationship between family and school approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.
- Sixth, families, schools, and community organizations all contribute to student achievement; the best results come when all three work together (p. 14-16).

In the same literature, Henderson and Berla (1994) also documented some specific benefits of family involvement on students:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and more homework done
- Fewer placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education (p. 1).

According to Henderson and Berla (1994), schools and communities also profit.

Schools that work well with families have:

- Improved teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- More support from families
- Higher student achievement
- Better reputations in the community (p. 1).

Epstein's research demonstrates that parents who are involved in school activities are more likely than others to have a positive view of the teacher . The greater confidence of such parents toward schools is translated into stronger support for curriculum development, teacher benefits, and school funding. (Fruchter, Galleta &

White, 1992)

A study by Epstein (1986) suggests that parent involvement maximizes cooperation and reduces antagonism between teachers and parents and enhances the teacher's professional standing from the parents' perspective. Oake's review of literature (as cited by Capper, 1993) suggests that those parent involvement efforts work best when teachers cooperatively plan instruction that can be carried out at home.

Types of family involvement

There is evidence of the impacts of involving parents in children learning at home. A study by Epstein and Dauber (1991) shows that the six types of parent involvement are related but separable. Their study also indicates that a strong school program in learning activities at home (type 4) is more predictive of other types. Stated differently, it means if schools are conducting programs to involve parents in learning activities at home, one could predict up to 32% accuracy that one or more of the other types of involvement were also in place. Communications from school to the home (type 2) are more prevalent but involvements in learning activities at home are difficult for many teachers to organize and are carried out in few places by fewer teachers. The study also shows that almost all parents want more information on how to help their own children.

A survey by Chavkin and Williams (1987) on principals' attitudes, current practices, and policies related to parent involvement in the education of their

elementary-age children showed some interesting findings. The results revealed most support for involving parents in traditional educational roles and less support for family involvements that call for shared decision-making in education. It is also noted that according to both administrators and parents, current practices in schools showed little evidence of parent involvement in shared decision-making activities such as the hiring/firing, evaluating of school staff or participating in school budget decisions. Sociologist James Coleman (1991) once suggested that “schools must do more than invite parents back into the school for regular parent-conferences; they must include parents in curriculum decision making and must educate parents in their role as teaching partners.” (as cited by Decker, 1994, p. 23)

Epstein (1988) has added three important attributes to successful broad-based programs. Firstly, school and family connections must take a developmental course. What she meant is that educators need to consider how to select and design ways to involve parents during different stages of their children's development and schooling. Secondly, effective partnership practices must be responsive to both common and unique family needs. They must include families from all ethnic and social backgrounds. The third attribute suggested by Epstein stresses that students must be key participants in all parental involvement initiatives. In this regard, how can schools enable more families, especially those parents who are presently most difficult to reach, to become and stay involved in the whole process of their children's education?

Barriers to family involvement

Thirty years of research indicate that greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education. Since school and family linkages are so important, why aren't more of them happening in public schools? A report released by the U.S. Department of Education cited the following factors as some barriers to parent involvement initiatives.

1. Lack of time: There have been increases in two-income families, single-parent families, and the need for family members to hold more than one job. Two-thirds of employed parents with children under 18 say they do not have enough time for their children (Riley, 1994).
2. Inflexible working schedules. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1990), about 70 percent of mothers with school-age children work (as cited by Carrasquillo & London, 1993).
3. Language barriers: Many immigrant families do not speak or understand English. They lack the English-language proficiency to take part in the traditional parental involvement activities at school. This language barrier may be a special problem for low-income families who have little or no education themselves
4. Uncertainty about how to contribute: Many parents today are unsure about how to help their children learn. These include teenage parents and those who may have had bad experience with schools themselves.

5. Lack of supportive environment: More parents now live in poverty. Low-income parents have less contact with schools than do their better-off counterparts.

A study by Fruchter and associates (1992) indicates that low income and minority families are often geographically, culturally, and psychologically distant from schools. The authors also point out that teachers lack skills to work collaboratively with families. Research on the involvement of disadvantaged families in their children's education tend to produce contradictory results. A recurring theme in studies on less educated parents is that parents do not want to or cannot become involved in their children's education (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Lareau, 1987). However, this assumption was challenged by some other studies which show that some teachers successfully involve parents of the most disadvantaged students in important ways (Epstein, 1990; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Henderson and Berla (1994) indicated from previous research that a higher level of family involvement is able to change the performance of those "at-risk" students substantially:

For children from families considered "at-risk", who may be low-income or from cultural backgrounds different from the mainstream, a higher level of family-school collaboration may be required. The studies of partnership-style preschool and elementary programs show that chronic low achievement can be reversed in a few years (p. 18).

Family involvement is most affected by the absence of family resources.

According to Schneider and Coleman (1993), "Since minority parents disproportionately confront this obstacle, one might expect to find less involvement for African American

and Hispanic parents” (p. 134). The lack of family involvement among Hispanic parents is due to some understandable factors. Hispanic parents perceive schools and families as separate institutions. As such, they are less likely to participate in school-related activities. They claim schools are responsible for their children's education. These parents feel themselves educationally unprepared to sit down with their children and help them to do their homework (Carrasquillo & London, 1993). Their limited English language proficiency background is another variable that hinders family involvement among Hispanic parents. However, in spite of all these limitations, Carrasquillo (1993) stresses that "Hispanic parents are eager and willing to participate in educating their children cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically” (p. 48).

Another study by Epstein and Dauber (1993) revealed that parents of elementary children are more involved than those in the middle schools because elementary school teachers do more to involve parents in the school and at home. Another barrier indicated in this study is parents' lack of skills to help their kids at home, as school subjects become more complex. This study examined barriers that were encountered, whether they were overcome, and how they were overcome.

Leadership for promoting family involvement

According to Epstein (1987), principals react differently to the role of leader in family involvement. She stresses that the principal has to lead the way to promote family involvement in the school:

In some schools, the principal leads in promoting parent involvement; in others, administrators leave the selection and use of parent involvement practices to their teaching staff. The lack of active administrative leadership and attention is due to, in part, to the dearth of useful, organized information on parent involvement in schools . . . Yet, it is the administrator's role to orchestrate activities that will help the staff study and understand parent involvement, and to select or design, evaluate, and revise programs for parent involvement (p. 120).

Regarding the controversial issue of who is responsible for initiating the "reaching out" to parents, Davies concluded that such moves should be made by a broad spectrum of the constituents of a school and its community, not just by the principal. However, in most instances, the leadership has to come from the principal with the involvement of at least some teaching staff (Davies, 1991). According to Henderson and Berla (1994):

At elementary school, children whose families reinforce good work and study habits at home, emphasize the value of education, and express high expectations, tend to do well. They do even better if their parents come to school, stay informed about their progress, and collaborate with their teachers. Epstein's studies show this is much more likely to happen if teachers take the initiative, by encouraging and guiding parents in ways to help their children (p. 18).

Davies' idea was supported by Alving (1993) who proposed that reaching out to all families requires more than one dedicated individual; it requires a team of individuals. Wiklund (1990) suggested that "committed leadership for effective parent involvement programs is characterized by administrative support from district and school administrators" (as cited by Burns, 1993, p. 15). Most of this research agrees on the notion that principals, teachers and parents should share experiences about what works and what does not in family involvement initiatives.

The following part of a letter written by a parent published in "Teacher/Parent Partnerships Handbook", indicates the importance of outreach efforts from schools:

Please don't wait until conference or report-card time to tell me about it. Tell me when you see me. Write a note or make a phone call, but however you do it, let me know as soon as possible, so that together we can tackle the problem before it gets any worse. I don't mind waiting to hear positive things about my child, but please let's discuss the negative as they happen (Meyers, Hyman, & Bobetsky, 1989, p. 7).

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The investigator formed a site-selection panel to help identify an elementary school in Virginia that presumably has exemplary and comprehensive family involvement programs. This study was designed to look at the process of how those family and community involvement programs and initiatives were put into place in that school. This chapter deals with the reasons for adopting the case study strategy, rationale for choosing an elementary school, study site selection procedures, data collection methods, and the data analysis processes used for this study.

Case study as the choice of research strategy

There are basically five major research strategies in the social sciences, namely experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories, and case studies. According to Yin (1994), the following three conditions are related to those five research strategies. The three conditions consist of (a) the type of research question posed, (b) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events, and (c) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events (p.4). Yin used the following table to illustrate the relationships.

Table 1

Relevant situations for different research strategies

Strategy	Form of research questions	Requires control over behavioral events?	Focuses on contemporary events?
Experiment	how, why	yes	yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes
Archival	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes,no
History	how, why	no	no
Case study	how, why	no	yes

Source: COSMOS Corporation (cited in Yin, 1994, p. 6)

A single case strategy was employed in this study to explore the process of family and community involvement at Sandusky Elementary School in Lynchburg, Virginia. There were three conditions that favored the use of case study strategy in this research. Firstly, research questions in this study were more explanatory in nature because they consisted mostly of the “how” questions. Secondly, the purpose of the study was to investigate a contemporary phenomenon by looking at the process of family and community involvement in an elementary school. The third criterion that favored the use of case study strategy in this research was that the investigator was interested in examining contemporary events over which he had no control. In addition to the above conditions, the use of case study approach in this study also allowed for a level of understanding and explanation that was not possible merely through describing relationships within the problem area (Merriam, 1985). The use of a single case study approach in this study allowed the investigator to have an in-depth inquiry into the process of family and community involvement in one particular school.

Rationale for choosing an elementary school

The investigator decided to use an elementary school as the study site for the following reasons. According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), earlier studies of parent involvement have not included comparisons across levels of schooling. Most of these studies have focused on one level of schooling, either elementary, the middle grades, or the high school level. In their own study, they concluded that:

Elementary school programs of parent involvement presently are stronger, more positive, more comprehensive than those in the middle grades. This is especially evident for workshops for parents on parenting skills, child development, and school programs; volunteers at school; learning activities at home; and involvement in school decisions (p. 299-300).

Research findings on parent-school partnerships demonstrate that family involvement in schools declines dramatically with each passing grade, especially in the middle grades and in high schools (Epstein, 1992 & Epstein, 1986)

Study site selection procedure

A Memorandum (Appendix A: Superintendent's Memo #194) was distributed by the Virginia Department of Education in 1993 to solicit information on effective parent involvement programs of public schools in Virginia. The Education Department was interested in staff resources, staff development, and other related materials that have been useful in increasing parent involvement. The investigator was involved in a project funded by Virginia Department of Education to assess the current nature of family involvement in the Commonwealth's public schools and to create a statewide plan for family and community involvement in education. Information on 281 schools in 130 school divisions was compiled, summarized, and organized in the form of a booklet entitled "Directory of Selected Programs of Family/Community Involvement in Virginia." In this directory, the investigator classified the parent involvement programs or initiatives in each of the 281 schools into the six categories of family involvement model proposed by Epstein. The directory also contains information on contact person/s

for family involvement in each school. The investigator reviewed and analyzed the above information as one of the ways to identify an elementary school in Virginia as the study site.

The criteria to look for in an exemplary school in this study was based on the following conditions:

- evidence of involving parents in children's learning.
- evidence of being creative in idea and innovative in technique.
- comprehensiveness in the programs.
- encouraged inclusion of parents of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

A site-selection panel was formed to help the investigator to narrow down the choice of school sites to a manageable number. This panel consisted of people who were involved in family involvement initiatives and programs at the state level. These people were selected from the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The persons selected to the panel included:

1. Dr. Stephen Parson (Associate Professor, Virginia Tech)
2. Dr. Margaret Roberts (Director of Community Relations, VA DOE)
3. Mrs. Judy Hudgins (Parent Resources, VA DOE)

The investigator sought advice and consultation from this panel in regard to the choice of the study site. The investigator proposed 14 preliminary school sites (Appendix B) to the panel for review and consideration. Attached to the list was also a letter describing the criteria for the selection procedure (Appendix C). The panel was

asked to help the investigator narrow the choice of the study sites to six schools. The panel members were free to include any other schools that did not appear in the investigator's preliminary list of potential schools for the study site.

A telephone conference was held between the investigator and the two panel members from the Virginia Department of Education. During the course of the conference, another school was added to the preliminary list. Finally, the panel helped the investigator to narrow the potential study sites to eight elementary schools (Appendix D). Based on a review of the final list, the investigator decided to choose Sandusky Elementary School in Lynchburg, Virginia, as the first target for a preliminary visit. The choice was made based on the evidence that Sandusky Elementary has documented exemplary family and community involvement programs. It was also noted that the school was the nearest among the eight proposed elementary schools.

Prior to the preliminary visit, a letter describing the selection procedure for the study site and the purpose of the study was sent to the principal of Sandusky Elementary School (Appendix E). A preliminary visit was made to the site on March 2, 1995. The investigator met with the principal of the school to discuss whether he would consent to having his school involved in the study. The visit also provided the opportunity for the investigator to verify and update the parent involvement programs and activities that were in place in the school. The response from the principal was very positive and encouraging. The family involvement programs and initiatives in the school were found to be comprehensive and innovative. The favorable conditions reinforced the

investigator's decision to select Sandusky Elementary School as the study site.

Data collection

In this study, the investigator used the “purposeful” sampling method to make decisions about whom to collect data from. Stated differently, the members of the sample were deliberately chosen based on criteria that they were relevant and could provide information to the research questions rather than depending on the criteria of randomness of selection.

The investigator made 20 visits to the site and carried out interviews, direct observations and document reviews. The investigator modified the snowball or chain sampling strategy proposed by Patton (1990) to identify people for interviewing. This is discussed in greater depth in the interview section. The investigator made use of people as a direct data source through observations when parents and community members took part in family involvement activities in the school. The investigator also examined products of people's activities and interactions through document reviews. The use of the multiple sources of evidence described above is one way of triangulation for the investigator to obtain a fuller understanding of the family involvement process in the school.

Interviews

The investigator used the “focused interview” method to carry out the interviews. According to Yin (1994):

A second type of interview is a focused interview, in which a respondent is interviewed for a short period of time -- an hour, for example. In such cases, the interviews may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but you are more likely to be following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol (p. 84-85).

Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) note that every interview has a structure, the difference lies in how that structure is negotiated. For this study, research questions were used to guide the formulation of the interview questions (See Appendix F for the framing questions). The structure of the interviews was not negotiated in this sense. Separate sets of framing questions were formulated for the principal, teachers and the parents/community members. These framing questions served only as a guide for the investigator. The types of questions asked were contingent with the nature of an interview depending upon whether it was formal or informal. Formal interviews were more planned and took place in a more quiet setting (for example in the principal's office) and in greater depth as opposed to informal interviews. An interview with a parent who came to eat lunch with his or her child or an on-site interview with a participant in a family involvement event was more informal in nature. This type of interview occurred with less prior planning than formal interviews. Time for the investigator to be with an interviewee was another factor affecting the type of question asked. The time for interviews in this study ranged from ten minutes to an hour.

The set of questions targeted for teachers was used as the field test before the investigator actually moved to the field. The purpose of doing the field test was to allow

the investigator practice interviewing techniques and also to have an idea of the type of responses that would likely come out from those questions. After the field test, appropriate modifications were made to improve the suitability of the questions.

A “chain process” was used to identify individuals for the entire interviewing process. Patton (1993) suggests the following approach for locating information-rich key informants.

The process begins by asking well-situated people: “Who knows a lot about _____? Who should I talk to?” By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases (p. 176)

The school principal was the main informant for the interviewing process.

During the interview with the principal, he was asked to suggest the names of persons in the school and the community who were knowledgeable and involved with the family/community involvement activities. At the end of most of the interviews, the investigator made it a practice to ask the respondents to recommend those individuals who they believed were most knowledgeable about family involvement initiatives in the school and the community. This helped the investigator to develop a chain of interview prospects and not merely rely on some key interviewees. The rationale for doing this was to get a broad perspective of all the people who participated in the family involvement initiatives. Information richness was the most important factor in the selection of the samples in this study. The investigator always concluded the interviews with follow-up arrangements with the interviewees in case a need for clarification arose

in the future.

Another approach by which the investigator got access to the sample is by interacting (as an observer) with the people who participated in family-related events and meetings that were held in the school. This type of observation allowed the investigator to get information that was not obtainable through interviews. It also allowed the investigator to personally talk to and solicit information from participants in the events. The nature of such interviews was different from those scheduled interviews in the sense that they were more open and offered an opportunity for the investigator to probe and clarify certain issues.

In the course of the data collection process, the investigator managed to conduct 30 audio-taped (with permission) interviews with people representing different segments of the population. All these interviews were fully transcribed by the investigator with the use of a Dictaphone. Typing out the recorded interviews helped the investigator to recall details and to relive what happened. The interview samples in this study include five people from the Lynchburg school administration office, the resource teacher of the Parent Center, 11 teachers and 13 parents. In addition to these audio-taped interviews, the investigator also conducted several informal interviews with mothers and fathers who came to eat lunch with their children. On many occasions, the investigator had the opportunity to talk to the participants of the family involvement events in the school (see Appendix G for a complete list of subjects interviewed).

Observations

The investigator made a number of field observations (Appendix H) while at the site. The observation technique used was the investigator acting as a complete observer. The investigator attended and observed family involvement events in the school during the data collection period, observed several PTO and Parent Advisory Council Meetings and accompanied the Sandusky Elementary Wrap Around Specialist on five home visits to the families of those at-risk students. According to Yin (1994) “Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied” (p.87). Observations described above provide the opportunity for the investigator to corroborate information that did not come out during the interviewing process.

The investigator maintained extensive field notes while at the study site. Field notes were made within twenty-four hours following an interview or an observation period. This type of literature provides extra explanation to certain evidence that did not come from the interviews. For example, by observing the family atmosphere at the “Volunteer Breakfast” or the “Evening with the Arts” events, the investigator had a better documentation of the “team spirit” between teachers, parents and community members.

Documentation

According to Yin (1994), the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (p.81). While at the site, the investigator

collected numerous documents related to family involvement (Appendix I). Documents were used to corroborate information from interview transcripts and observational field notes. For example, the contents of the annual school plans were reviewed to make inferences about the priority of family and community involvement in the leadership perspective of the school. However, such information was used only as a clue to further investigation with the principal and not merely as a definitive finding. Ely et al. (1993) suggest that checking data obtained by a variety of methods is one way of contributing to trustworthiness (p.96-97).

The research questions were used to determine the way each piece of documentation was used either to support evidence from other sources or to make inferences. This is shown in Table 2.

Leaving the field

The investigator left the field after attending all the family involvement events just before the school closed for the summer holidays. One of the indicators for the investigator to leave the field is “redundancy” in terms of information given by the interviewees. The investigator, in the last few interviews, noticed a similar situation to that described by Bradley (1993) below.

Table 2

Relationship between research questions and documents

Research questions	Documents
1. How does a school get families to participate in their children's education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lynchburg Volunteer Handbook● Parent Center Newsletter● Partners in Education programs● Minutes of meetings● Documents on Lynchburg Volunteer program● Sandusky Annual School Plans
2. How are family involvement initiatives geared toward the hard-to-reach families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wrap Around Services● Minutes of meetings● Sandusky Annual School Plans
3. How do family involvement policies at school and classroom levels impact the family involvement initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● School Board policies on volunteers, parent advisory council, homework, PTO meeting schedules● Sandusky Annual School Plans● Lynchburg Volunteer Handbook● Elementary Parent/Student Handbook 1994/95
4. Who provides leadership to the development of family involvement initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sandusky Annual School Plans● Lynchburg Volunteer Program● Principal's weekly memos● Minutes of meetings
5. What resources do the school and the district provide to promote family involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sandusky Annual School Plans● Mini-grants applications● Lynchburg Elementary Student/Teacher Handbook

A frequently used guideline for knowing when to stop sampling is referred to as “saturation” -- continuing to sample until the responses consistently provide no new or conflicting information (p. 440).

Data processing

There are no firm rules or procedures for qualitative analysis as there are for some quantitative analytic methods (Patton, 1990). Ely et al. (1991) suggest that:

Whatever your approach to analysis, it seems fair to say that you, the researchers, are in charge of making meaning, of making sense of your data. No one else can do that job since you are so intimately bound up with shaping your study and with understanding what you studied (p. 143).

Some analytic activities went on during field work, for example the analysis of certain documents to help in the interviewing process, but the intensive analysis took place only after the investigator left the school site.

Coding and establishing categories

All the audio-taped interviews were transcribed by the investigator using a Dictaphone. Each piece of response for an interview question was coded in the following manner:

<p>Pggy 6A 0.3 rchot</p> <p>One of the ways as we do it, I'll send newsletters out to the parents, one went out today, and that goes to each of the elementary school including the pre-k classes. So, that's about almost six thousand newsletters. That includes the teachers and staff, its just under six thousand. Students, teachers, and staff in the elementary schools get that. And I also, while I am doing workshops, I sent that information to the newspaper.</p>

Pggy: Name code for the interviewee **6A**: Tape number and side

2.5: Time counter for the tape **rchat**: category code

Responses for all the interview transcripts were coded in this way. Information pertaining to respondent's name, tape number and time counter on the tape helped make the interpretive process much easier when the investigator wanted to go back to a specific location on a tape for clarification. By listening to the tapes repeatedly, the investigator had a better understanding about the meanings of the data.

After the investigator made initial inquiries to the coded interview transcripts, categories started to emerge from those responses. The investigator used brief phrases for the emerging categories. Tentative categories including subcategories were tried out and revised until all the information was categorized. The investigator always referred to the research question of this study while checking the categories and Ely et al. (1991) have proposed the following guideline for doing that.

This is not to say that there are no stated or tacit guidelines to help such people in creating final categories. The entire research experience up to this point helps to provide such guidelines, and of no small importance to this endeavor are the research questions that have been honed in process (p.147).

Whenever more than one category exists for a response, the investigator used multiple category codes for this particular response (See Appendix J for the use of multiple coding system to a single response). Splitting up a response for the same question into several categories would not retain the context in which these categories

exist.

Developing themes

Due to the large amounts of textual data during analysis, the investigator used a text management program, ASKSAM (Access Stored Knowledge Via Symbolic Access Method) to facilitate the identification and generation of themes in this study. A case study by Jacobs and Aron (1987) suggested that the use of a computer-based text management program such as ASKSAM can increase the efficiency of some aspects of qualitative data analysis to a significant degree.

The use of the computer program in this study was only intended to facilitate the mechanical activities (the use of the search function and frequency counts), but not to replace it. Jacobs and Aron (1987) also suggested, "Some important insights may not be apparent when analyzing data using a computer as they might when using a manual system." They go on to say that "Manual systems may allow a more holistic review of the text data" (p.14). In this study, the investigator integrated the computer-based and manual data analysis so that the advantages of each method were utilized.

The transcript for each interview was entered into the data base as separate records. The investigator used the text management program to retrieve text data from the transcripts according to the coded categories. The same procedure was carried out for all the transcripts. The retrieved categories were printed and sorted according to their respective categories (See Appendix K for an example of the retrieved data on "gender" category). This process went on until all the transcripts were processed in the

same manner.

The investigator did some initial analysis of the sorted text data to identify and generate some of the preliminary themes for each of the categories. This was done by reviewing the data for statements that particularly stood out as potential themes. For example, expressive statements that show the interviewees “feel comfortable in the school” under the category on “opportunities for involvement” were reviewed and grouped together. These statements were then developed into a major theme under that category. The interpretive process of identifying the themes was also cross checked with observational data and the document reviews. This process was repeated until themes for each category emerged from the sorted text data.

The field notes and document reviews were used to support the interview transcripts. Field notes in the form of observational data and the related family involvement documents were used to supplement the electronic recordings (audio-tapes). The field notes were particularly useful in analyzing the environmental and emotional component of an event. For example, information on interaction between teachers and parents during the “Evening with The Arts” and the “Hot Dog Lunch” was available only through observational data and not the interview transcripts. Documents related to family involvement were used to support and verify the research questions as proposed earlier in Table 2.

Chapter IV

Findings of the Study

Introduction

Data in this study were collected through interviews, observations and document analysis. These methods of collecting evidence were used to answer the research questions in this study. The investigator puts this chapter into perspective by giving some brief descriptions of Sandusky Elementary School and the principal of the school. The findings of the study are presented through categories and themes developed from the data.

The study site: Sandusky Elementary School, Lynchburg, Virginia

The Sandusky Elementary School building has two wings. The first unit, now housing grades one and two and one kindergarten class, was completed in 1964. When the school opened in September of 1964, 210 students were enrolled in two half-day kindergarten classes, two first grade classes, and one each of grades two through six.

In January of 1967, construction was begun on the second unit, the elementary building, now housing fourth and fifth grades and three third grade classes. In May of 1974, the construction of a million-dollar addition to Sandusky Elementary School was begun. The new structure, consisting of an office complex, additional storage, teacher's lounge, media center and office, two kindergarten spaces, a music and art area, and

cafeteria was completed in July of 1975.

During the year of 1975-76, the city of Lynchburg annexed 25 square miles of Campbell and Bedford Counties. Of this territory, a large portion of Campbell county directly adjacent to the school property was assigned to the Sandusky Elementary School attendance zone. In an effort to meet a court-ordered desegregation plans, the inner-city attendance was also increased. With the opening of the new Heritage High School in the Brookville area and the establishment of three middle schools consisting of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, Sandusky Elementary became a K-5 school beginning with the 1977-78 school year.

The present Sandusky Elementary School has three classes each of Kindergarten through fifth grade. The student enrollment as of April 1995 stood at 394 students with racial composition of 68% whites and 32% minorities. The racial proportion of whites to minority students in the Lynchburg City Public School were 56% to 44% respectively. During this academic year, there were 114 (29%) students at Sandusky Elementary qualified for the Free Lunch Program and seven students for the Reduced-lunch Program.

The school was staffed by the principal, a teacher leader, a secretary, a media librarian, 18 classroom teachers, 15 resource personnel, six teacher assistants, three custodial staff and three cafeteria staff. The school attendance zone serves the neighborhood population and also covers part of the inner-city population. The inner-city students of Lynchburg City are bused to all the elementary schools in the system

and Sandusky Elementary accommodates part of that population.

Sandusky Elementary School principal

The Sandusky Elementary School principal started his teaching career in 1963 at Perrymont Elementary School in Lynchburg, Virginia. After several years of teaching the fifth and sixth graders in that school, he went to R.S. Payne Elementary School where he taught the sixth graders for two years. From R.S. Payne, he went to T.C. Miller and became the unit leader for three years.

From T.C. Miller, he went to Kizer Dearington (a paired school between Kizer Elementary and Dearington Elementary) and became assistant principal there for four years. Then he went back to R.S. Payne Elementary as principal and stayed there for nine years. He came to Sandusky Elementary from R.S. Payne Elementary and this is his sixth year in this school.

He obtained both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Lynchburg College. His bachelor's degree was a joint major in religion and education and his master's degree was in school administration.

Besides his academic qualification, he has attended many workshops and additional graduate classes. When he was asked about the things that he found most difficult about working with parents, he said it was his

“The most difficult [thing about working with parents]. Probably the parents that you can't get to. The ones that won't come for conferences. You can't get them on the telephone. You go and knock on the door and they won't answer the door. There are not many of those, but there are a few. That's probably the most difficult [thing about working with parents]”

experience dealing with those “hard-to-reach” parents. According to the principal, the only way to get these parents into the school is to develop some positive rapport with them, but it takes time to accomplish that.

Categories and themes

Seven out of the eight categories that emerged from the text-data were related to the research questions that were asked in this study. This is shown in Table 3.

Gender imbalance is a category that emerged incidentally from the analysis. This was not an issue that the investigator intended to study on the outset. It was found that participants of family involvement events in the school as well as in the parent-related meetings were predominantly mothers (See also Appendix L).

Themes that emerged from each category are presented below.

Opportunities for involvement

1. Parents feel comfortable in the school

All 13 of the parents interviewed said that they are welcome in the school and they generally feel comfortable being in the school. The investigator made frequency counts on the words that were used to describe the open environment in the school. The finding of the analysis is summarized in Table 4.

Table 3

**Relations of emerged categories
and research questions**

Research questions	Categories
1. How does a school get families to participate in their children's education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Opportunities for involvement● Reaching out to parents● Barriers to family involvement
2. How are family involvement initiatives geared toward the hard-to-reach families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Opportunities of involvement● Barriers to family involvement
3. How do family involvement policies at school and classroom levels impact the school-family initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Impact of policy on family involvement
4. How do parents, teachers, and administrators perceive the effects of school-family partnerships?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Effect of family involvement
5. Who provides leadership to the development of family involvement initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Leadership that promotes family involvement
6. What resources do the school and the district provide to promote family involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Resources to promote family involvement

Table 4
**Words parents used to
describe their feelings in the school**

Words	Frequency
Welcome	36
Caring	9
Wanted	32
Needed	24
Comfortable	45

The supervisor for volunteer services suggested that for parents to become part of their children's educational process, they need to feel comfortable enough to come into the school.

"I think its most important for parents to feel comfortable in the school environment . . . If you don't feel comfortable with the people in the school and don't feel like you're part of the team, then you're not comfortable in our school"

One parent described the "open door" policy adopted by the school enabling her to be in the school anytime she wishes.

"We love to come in and have lunch anytime we want with the kids. We don't have to get permissions. We can come in the classroom anytime we want and just sit and view and be with our kids. We are very welcome"

Another parent commented that there is always somebody in there for you the moment you step into the school building.

"When you walk in here, somebody speaks to you almost a minute you walk in the front door. Whether its the secretary, whether its Jack [the principal] comes out of his office, whether its an aide who was copying pictures, you know, there is always somebody . . . I feel welcome walking into this classroom at anytime of the day"

Sandusky Elementary "Volunteer of the Year" (1993/4) said that parents are very much wanted and needed in the school.

"This is a very caring, a very caring school. I think this is one of the best that I have ever seen . . . I think they [the parents] feel ease to come to the school. I think they feel very much wanted and very much needed . . . They feel that the teachers work with them and want them to come"

A parent whose son is in the Suzuki Violin program, considered Sandusky Elementary as one of the "friendliest" schools in the area.

"I feel very comfortable. In fact this is one of the friendliest schools around. The teachers are always smiling at you. When you walk down the hallway, people greet you and they are very helpful. I am very comfortable"

The school teacher leader said that parents need to feel comfortable and not intimidated to come into the school.

“I think just being warm and welcoming and trying to make them feel like their child is a good child. I don’t want to come and hear bad things about my child. That’s the primary way of making them feel like they can come here and participate, make them feel equal”

2. Opportunities for involvement at different levels

There is a wide variety of opportunities for parents to participate in the school system and there are numerous family involvement programs and initiatives at Sandusky Elementary School itself (See Appendix M for family involvement events at Sandusky Elementary). According to the PTO president, the school has to create a variety of involvement opportunities for the parents.

“I think schools have to reach out to parents. You have to give them opportunities to get involved. I really believe that most parents will get involved if you work with them; I think just by looking at ways to give parents opportunities to come to school, we’ll be able to accomplish that”

The interview transcripts, field observations, and document analysis show various levels of opportunities for parents and community members to get involved. Table 5 shows the different levels of involvement opportunities.

Table 5

Family involvement activities

Levels of involvement	Types of involvement activities
Involvement at school and at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Family involvement events in the school (See also Appendix M)● Participation in the PTO/PTA/Parent Advisory Council● Helping children with learning at home
Division-wide involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participation in Superintendent's Advisory Council and various division-wide task forces● Using the Homework Hotline● Using Lynchburg Parent Center
Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Formal business-school partnerships● High school students helping out in the classroom● Wrap Around specialists working with social agencies

The school system has one of the most extensive business-school partnership programs in Virginia. According to the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the Lynchburg City Schools' Partners in Education programs have brought in a tremendous amount of resources for the school division.

"Over the course of the last four years, through the school-business partnerships, we probably have brought in over a million dollars worth of resources into the school division. Mostly the resources have been in technology labs, software programs, hardware and curriculum development in the middle and high school levels"

Sandusky Elementary School has formal partnerships with Central Virginia Laboratories & Consultants, McDonald's, PIP Printing, Nations Bank (See Appendix N for these four partnerships), and Westminster-Canterbury Nursing Home. Students from one of the Sandusky Elementary third-grade classes wrote friendly letters to residents of the Westminster-Canterbury nursing home. The center started sponsoring a division-wide essay contest last year (1993/94) which was called "My best older friend". The third graders from Sandusky Elementary have visited Westminster-Canterbury on several occasions. The teacher who is in charge of this partnership described the experience as valuable for her students.

"They [the third-grade students] are very empathetic. I saw a lot of tenderness and caring from the children. When we read things about an elderly person to them now, they will understand, whereas before, lots of them never had the experience of being around a person this age"

The supervisor for the Lynchburg schools' volunteer services has engaged 45 students from the two high schools in the division to help teachers in the classrooms one period per day. There are three of them at Sandusky Elementary; two of them are

helping teachers in Kindergarten classes, one of them in a third-grade class. These 45 students are interested in being teachers, or intend to work with children as a career.

They have teachers in the division now who have come through this program. According to the supervisor for volunteer services, this program has been in existence since 1975 and is another valuable resource for the school system.

The Lynchburg City Schools superintendent has perceived family involvement in its truest sense as involvement in decision making.

3. Support for family involvement initiatives from the spouse

The participation opportunity of active volunteers in the school is enhanced by the support of their spouses. A PTO Executive Board officer considered the moral support he gets from his wife as a motivator to get him involved in the school activities and meetings.

“Well, I think you need to seek resources beyond your parents . . . For a period a day, and most of them (the high school students) work all year long. We have 180 school days and that’s 180 hours that one teacher will get”

I would like to see parental involvement, I don’t mean parental involvement as far as taking care of certain recognition activities, teacher appreciation week, secretary appreciation day or student reading incentives. I think the true involvement comes from parents involved in the decisions. And we do that in Lynchburg when we put together division-level task forces, division-level committees to look at major programs. We invite x number of parents from each of the three school board districts to sit on the committees with teachers and administrators. That’s true parent involvement”

“First of all, by having a very understanding wife. It takes a lot of time. The other night when I was here, she was at home with the two girls, bathing them, getting them ready for bed and that helps a lot. The other spouse, in this case my wife, is very helpful, very understanding. When I tell her I have a PTO meeting or I’ve got to go to school, I don’t get any grief or any complaints. That helps me a lot”

Another parent regards spouse support as a factor that allows her to invest time and energy in the “Evening with The Arts” program. According to this parent, her husband took two days off from work to be at home with her children while she was busy organizing the “Evening with The Arts” event.

“Numerous times, he was taking care of the little ones while I was here. While the ‘Evening with The Arts’ was going on here, he took several days off from work to take care of things at home because he knew I was going to be here. When I got home, he had cleaned the house. Supper was ready, you know, things like that really help”

Another parent said the support she gets from her husband will allow her to sit in on the PTO Executive Board Committee next year. The investigator also observed that her husband was in the school supervising their child during one of the PTO meetings. He took their child back home after the meeting so that she could attend another parent-related meeting in another school. She also revealed that without such moral support from her husband, she would not be able to participate in the school as effectively as she would like to.

Leadership that promotes family involvement

1. The principal’s role in shaping the school culture

The principal is the key player in setting the tone for promoting family involvement activities in the school. Comments from parents and teachers on the principal’s leadership in promoting family and community involvement came in different forms.

One parent observed the difference in administrative approach, especially in dealing with parents, since the principal came to Sandusky Elementary six years ago. The atmosphere in the school makes her feel important.

“I can come in just to look at my child as long as I sign in to let them know that I’m in the building. I feel welcome walking into the classroom at anytime of the day. It has been like that since Jack [the principal] came. I have noticed a big difference with him . . . Honestly I would think Jack is a big part of that because he is caring. He makes you feel like you are an important part here . . . He is a wonderful person”

Another parent who is one of the coaches for the school’s “Odyssey of the Mind” teams viewed the principal’s involvement in school events as a support for the parents.

“He is one of the only principals we saw at the OM [Odyssey of the Mind] competitions. He actually came to the competition. He is very involved and he always comes to the kids’ stuff. He always cheers the moms. He is great. He loves to see parents come in”

The school’s parent coordinator felt that she had made a correct choice by sending her children to Sandusky Elementary because it has a great principal. She was also very pleased with the principal’s support during the parent-initiated “Hot Dog Lunch.” There were about 40 parents who came in to grill and serve hot dogs to the students, faculty and staff of Sandusky Elementary on that day. The lunch was ready almost an hour earlier

“If we can take Jack [the principal] to the middle school and then high school, I’ll go with him and the kids the whole way . . . He is great. He is wonderful . . . If I can’t send my child to a private school, this is where I want it, right here. I would not have sent my child to another school”

“The hot dogs were cooked too fast. I said to Jack [the principal], ‘Can we eat early?’ He could have said ‘No, we got to eat at twelve’, but he didn’t. He is wonderful, he is great. And having that flexibility helps us because we would have been standing around for an hour waiting, but we didn’t have to do that”

before the actual recess time (12:00 p.m.). The principal showed his support to the parents for initiating the “Hot Dog Lunch” by rescheduling the recess time for the entire school.

The supervisor for volunteer services viewed the principal as the key factor in promoting and overseeing the volunteer program.

“The principal most of all, the principal is the leader, and the principal can make or break the program [volunteer program] in his or her leadership . . . You will see that we have a whole list of expectations of the principal because the principal is the leader, the instructional and the administrative leader”

In the Lynchburg City Schools Volunteer Handbook, it is clearly stated that school principals play a vital role in a school’s volunteer program.

“The PRINCIPAL is the administrative and instructional leader in the school. Under the principal’s guidance, the entire school staff, including the volunteers, work to meet the needs of students. Direction of the school’s volunteer program is the responsibility of the PRINCIPAL”

The principal at Sandusky Elementary tried to include a broad representation of the people in the Principal’s Parent Advisory Council in terms of attendance area, socioeconomic level, race, and gender.

“On the Principal’s Parent Advisory Council, basically I select parents to sit on the committees. I sent them invitations and called them if they will serve on the council. I get input from the teachers and particularly from the school guidance counselor . . . We try to see that we have a good mix in terms of racial and gender and cover all the different neighborhoods. I try to have at least one parent of a child who has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan)”

2. Leadership by example

The investigator had an opportunity to observe an occasion where the Lynchburg School superintendent

“I think it’s important for Superintendents of schools to be out in the schools and to be knowledgeable of who the students are in the classrooms . . . What I did was I sent letters to all kindergarten, first and second grade teachers offering my service as a volunteer teacher . . . I like to do it whenever they want me to do it. I need to be in the school to see what’s going on and to share my thoughts on things”

personally came to the school and read to the first graders. It has been his practice to send out letters to all kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers, offering his service as a volunteer reader.

The investigator had an interview with the school superintendent after he had read to the first graders. The superintendent shared his intention of bringing parent-teacher conferences into the communities.

“Take the conferences off campus and move them into the communities. Next year I’d like to move to a series of ‘Community Teas’ and ‘Community Coffees’, if you will, that are held not in schools and not necessarily in churches but possibly in private homes. Invite the parents, teachers, associations of the Parent Teacher Organizations Presidents to may be orchestrate several ‘coffees’ and ‘teas’ in and around the schools and they might be in private homes. Let me go into the homes where parents are comfortable. I’ve done this on a number of occasions”

3. Parent groups’ initiatives

The “Evening with the Arts” was held on April 11 at Sandusky Elementary. This is an evening event initiated, planned and organized by the parents. This idea originated from the PTO secretary who wanted to do something different for the students this year. The parents wrote a mini-grant proposal (\$500) to the Lynchburg City Schools Education Foundation. It ended up being the only parent-initiated program among the 13 grants (See Appendix O for the grant approval letter) awarded by the Education Foundation.

There were eight arts centers situated in different rooms in the school building that evening. The investigator observed that the parents and community members were engaged in various hands-on art activities with their children. Teachers stayed on that evening to help the parents in different art stations. The evening was also filled with

violin presentations and a ballet performance by the Virginia School of Arts. The event received positive comments from the principal, teachers, parents, community members and students. According to the school parent coordinator, they sold more than 300 spaghetti dinners that evening. She was proud of the role that parents had played in this program.

“This event is [Evening with the Arts] just the moms putting it together. There is no teacher. Jack [the principal] is not involved. We’re doing it, the whole thing”

The students also showed their appreciation for the “Evening with the Arts” by sending letters to one of their “art moms.” These are the parents who teach

Dear Mrs. X,
Thank you for coming and doing art with us. I hope you come again to do more fun art projects. Thank you for helping with the party. I like everything you do for us. See you again.
Your friend.
(Student’s name)

art to the students during the week when the part-time art teacher does not come to the school. The “art mom” has received eight such complimentary letters from students in her art class.

4. Teachers’ support for family involvement

It was observed through a number of occasions that teachers at Sandusky Elementary welcome parents in the school. Teachers and parents were seen working as a team during the “Evening with The Arts”, “Odyssey of the Mind” presentations, the “Walk-A-Thon”, “Field Day”, the “Hot Dog Lunch”, “Learning Incentive” activities, and the “Volunteer Breakfast.”

“We work together as a total faculty to offer programs that the children are involved then we invite the parents to come and see”

A teacher who is also a unit leader told how teachers in this school are seen working as a team to promote family involvement.

A third grade teacher described the ways she used parents as classroom volunteer readers.

“This year I have used what we called ‘volunteer reader’. I tried to do it in a way that will be real informal so that the parents could feel they can just come in. They don’t have to worry about any formality . . . The children love it. They wait to see who is going to go next”

According to the school guidance counselor, most of the teachers at Sandusky Elementary are middle-age teachers. So they have considerable experience with getting parents involved both at home and in school. The kindergarten unit teachers have planned and carried out a series of activities that involved parents for their growth plan. They have involved parents of the kindergarten classes in making T-shirts for Christmas, having parents participate in the writing-to-read lab, and having parents participate in the make-it-take-it file-making workshop with their kids. During the file-making workshop, 25 parents were seen participating in the hands-on activities with their children.

The teacher leader has made a proposal to take parent-teacher conferences to one of the federally subsidized housing units in the inner-city area next year.

“I have to pursue this more next year. We will take our conference day and take half of it and say perhaps go over to the Lynchburg High which is a low SES unit. They have a conference room there and then we will have teacher conference taken to them”

The teacher leader also suggested to the City Transit Authority to change the bus route so that the bus will come right to the school instead of stopping several blocks away from the school building. In the present situation, parents have to walk quite a distance to come to the school.

“One thing I proposed to the city transit was to alter the bus route so that it will come by the school. The bus route is about three blocks from here . . . Now, some of these parents that come here for conference and that they may have a two year old, a lot of them have two or three kids. That’s an effort to walk from there over to here with extra children”

The PTO treasurer had good things to say about the teachers. He was appreciative of a teacher’s invitation for him to stay on for a movie shown to the students.

“And then the teachers, they love you to come in. Ricky’s [his son] teacher asked me, ‘Are you going to stay for the movie [learning incentive for students] with him?’ You know, I mean, they don’t have to do that, but they want you involved so they asked you”

Resources to promote family involvement

1. System-wide commitment

The school system has a 36-year-old tradition of volunteerism. The supervisor for volunteer services from the Lynchburg school administration oversees the program. Each school has a parent coordinator who promotes and coordinates the volunteer program at each building level. According to the supervisor for volunteer services, each school has ownership of its program and parent coordinators have to be flexible when dealing with parent volunteers. During an interview with the investigator, the supervisor for volunteer services stresses three major values to be expected out of the parent

volunteers. The volunteers must be dependable, be willing to work within the school system, and must respect confidentiality.

It is clearly stated in the Lynchburg School Board policy that the School Board recognizes that volunteers make a valuable contribution to the educational program.

Their involvement increases community support of the school (Adopted January 6, 1981). According to the school superintendent, the Lynchburg school volunteer program has been a good resource for the school system.

“We have somewhere ninety-three thousand hours of volunteer time in 1993-94. You know, if you multiply that times five dollars an hour, you are talking about almost half a million dollars of volunteer work, and its a powerful commodity, its a powerful resource. I don’t mean so much financially. Its a powerful resource when you put other adults and financial and working with the children because it shows the children the diversity of our world”

A good resource provided by the school system to get those hard-to-reach families into the school is through the Wrap Around Services. The program was funded through Lynchburg Youth Services about 12 years ago, when the school system contracted with the Youth Services to provide this service. The Lynchburg City Schools administration took over the Wrap Around Services from the Lynchburg Youth Services back in 1993 (See Appendix P for objectives of the Wrap Around Services). The concept of Wrap Around Services suggests that schools work together with community agencies and resources to provide assistance to students and their families. There are 12 Wrap Around Specialists in Lynchburg City Schools. The Wrap Around Specialist at Sandusky Elementary is assigned to cover two schools. His main duty in the school is to oversee student attendance by working closely with the teachers. He makes home visits,

helps students with dental care, and obtains free or subsidized eye glasses for the needy students. He also provides transportation for parents to come for parent-teacher conferences.

According to the supervisor for the Wrap Around Services, the program deals mainly with the “at-risk” population in the school system.

Lynchburg City Schools have specified certain criteria for identifying “at-risk”

students (See Appendix Q for the criteria for identifying “at-risk” students and the “at-risk” student referral form). Sandusky Elementary has identified 39 (10%) “at-risk” students from the school population.

“Well, let see, for division-wide, we have identified roughly a thousand students who are considered “at-risk”. All the way through, that’s all the way through high school. We have nine thousand in the division, so about one thousand kids are “at-risk”, that’s all the way through the system. The largest percentage of those are identified at the elementary level. There are like five hundred or some kids who are considered “at-risk” at elementary level”

The Wrap Around Specialist of the school perceived his job as coordinating all the social agency services with the “at-risk” families. He also said that the one factor that these “at-risk” students

“We see a lot of what we call “at-risk” students. They have a lack of food and the basic necessities such as clothing, or what have you. We fill the gap . . . The teachers are doing the educational part and I’m coordinating the families with all the agency services. I’ll see all the parents, all the people that are involved like parents, guardians, sisters or brothers. I see all of those people”

have in common is poverty. The Wrap Around Specialist was able to bring some of the hard-to-reach parents into the school who had not been responsive to teachers.

The Parent Center at R.S. Payne Elementary is the largest Parent Center in the state of Virginia. It is funded both by federal and local funds. A full-time paid staff runs

the center, organizes monthly workshops and helps parents of Lynchburg City schools to participate in their children's learning process. The investigator made two visits to the center. The resources that the center provides for the parents include the following:

1. Children's books including some with cassettes.
2. Parenting books.
3. Books on special needs such as disabilities.
4. Videos on stories, parenting and attention deficit.
5. Games to reinforce reading and math skills.
6. Worksheets to be used at home for parents to work with their kids.

2. Availability of mini-grants

A number of parent-related programs and activities were made available due to the existence of mini-grants to the teachers and parents. In addition to the parent-initiated "Evening with the Arts" program, there were some other programs also made possible by mini-grants. The school guidance counselor at Sandusky Elementary also wrote a mini-grant (1992) to fund an on-site parenting workshop at Birchwood Apartments, which is a federally subsidized housing unit. A partnership project for the Prevention of Substance Abuse was organized by the Wrap Around Services due to the availability of a mini-grant.

Reaching out to parents

1. Regular communication with families

Sandusky Elementary and Lynchburg City schools communicate with the families in numerous ways. They send printed materials home in the form of newsletters or notes. They also make use of other media such as calling the parents on the phone, using

“First of all, we have teachers and principals and other people make a real effort to be in touch with parents when they first register their kids. They [the principal and teachers] follow up by sending notes with their children when their children are doing well to make parents very informed about special programs and things that are happening with their children at school. I know each school generally sends out a newsletter or some information to parents on a regular basis about special events and things that are going on at school”

Lynchburg Cable Channel two, and the Homework Hotline. Most of the parents feel that no matter what the mode of communication is, the bottom line is that they need to communicate with families on a regular basis. The supervisor for the Wrap Around Services described the variety of ways that schools in the city kept parents informed about special events that happen in the schools.

One of the Sandusky Elementary unit leaders emphasized that schools need to communicate positively with families and not only when a problem arises.

“I frequently make phone calls to parents not only if there are problems but also on positive things that happen in the classroom. I want to make the parents aware that their students have been successful in something, or accomplish the goals. I will frequently make phone calls”

The principal noticed a difference in communication pattern between teachers and parents now and 15 years ago. Teachers at Sandusky Elementary even encouraged parents to call them at night.

“The teachers and parents have a more open communication system now than they used to. Fifteen years ago I did not have a teacher who would send home a note saying that, ‘Here is my phone number, if you need me, call me at night’. I have several teachers here that do that. They passed their phone numbers to all the parents at the beginning of the year. The parents call the teachers and the teachers call the parents. Its a good working relationship”

The in-coming PTO president talked about his strategy to reach out to parents next year. He would like to have more personal contacts with the parents through telephones.

“I want to call more people on the phone . . . I think by calling more people, talking to them and letting the parents feel that, ‘Hey, they took the effort to call me up at home and ask me to come to the meeting. I will try my best’. This way will make them feel committed to be here. Once they got into the habit of coming, we might be able to get more parents involved in the school”

2. Get into the community

There were several suggestions to bring the school events such as the parent-teacher conferences and parenting workshops into the community. This is one of the ways to break disadvantaged families’ feelings of fear toward schools. The guidance counselor at Sandusky Elementary initiated an on-site parenting workshop which was called “Parenting on the Move” at Birchwood Apartments in 1992. According to the guidance counselor, the effort had little success, but the project did receive recognition from the Lynchburg City Mayor. The Sandusky Elementary principal also revealed that he intends to have another on-site parenting workshop at another federally subsidized housing complex next year.

3. Reach out to parents in different ways

There are several reach out strategies taken by the resource teacher from the Lynchburg Parent Center. The ways that she reaches out to the community include the following approaches.

1. A newsletter was sent out every month or every six weeks.
2. Disseminate information through SPOTLIGHT, the faculty and staff newsletter for Lynchburg City Schools.
3. Advertise through Lynchburg Cable Channel 2.
4. Talk to faculties of each school about the services of the Parent Center.
5. Participate in LENS (Lynchburg Elementary News Show) to talk on topics such as parent-teacher conferences, testing, and beginning reading.

The Wrap Around Specialist at Sandusky Elementary has used multiple approaches to reach out to those “hard-to-reach” parents.

“I go to their homes sometimes repeatedly. You have to go a number of times to a parent’s home. You have to make sure that they know that they need to be involved in the school system on a personal basis . . . See, the people in that community know me. They know who I am and they know my vehicle”

According to the Wrap Around Specialist, he needs to form a psychological strategy to deal with the “hard-to-reach” families. These families are very defensive

“Sometimes they might be a little ashamed to open the door because their house is darkly lit. It may be smelly and they are not as clean as they should be . . . You have to show them that you do feel comfortable in their house. If you don’t, you loose the ball game. They are not going to work with you”

to the school personnel due to their unfavorable home environment.

The investigator had accompanied the Wrap Around Specialist to make five home visits to those disadvantaged families. Table 6 helps to summarize the reasons and out- comes of the five home visits.

The supervisor for Wrap Around Specialists clarified that the purpose of home visits to those “hard-to-reach” families

sometimes is to build a rapport with them.

They have to feel comfortable before they

can come to the school. It was observed

that the Wrap Around Specialist from

Sandusky Elementary has built a rapport

with the community in the inner-city school attendance zone.

“Sometimes it’s very helpful when student support specialists make a visit to a parent or a family. They sit down and talk to them about their child’s performance. Sometimes they talk about life in general just to build the friendship and the relationship that encourages the parent to come to school to participate and feel more comfortable”

4. Promote a “building process” among parents to enhance family involvement

What the investigator means by

“building process” is to encourage parents to

share their good experiences in schools with

friends in the neighborhood. The resource

teacher at the Parent Center uses parents

who have had good experiences at the

center to spread news about the Parent Center’s services to the other parents in their

“Very often what I will do is when a parent came in and experienced something very positive and felt good, I would say to this parent, ‘Next time why don’t you bring a friend with you?’ A friend telling a friend about what has worked for his or her child is more trustworthy. This would help to spread the news that this lady [the resource teacher at the Parent Center] over here is be able to give the things that you need for your son at home. So, you know, that kind of word of mouth is the best way to sell it”

Table 6

Five home visits to hard-to-reach families

Home visits	Reason for the visit	Person/s contacted
1	The parents need to sign Special Education eligibility forms.	No one was at home.
2	The student was absent for two days in a row (The student missed the bus).	Met the father.
3	Get money from the parent for medical Prescription (ADHD case).	The mom was in New York.
4	Parent to sign up consent form for the child's field trip.	No one was at home.
5	Parent to sign up consent form for the child's field trip.	The mom was working but met the student's aunt.

neighborhood.

The supervisor for the volunteer services shared similar ideas on this technique.

“If you can get one person who lives in a low-income neighborhood who is a parent of these “at-risk” children you described. You get one person who has a good experience and goes home and tells to neighbours then you might get one of those neighbors, maybe two, but it really has to be a building process”

5. Children participate in programs

According to most of the parents, one of the best ways to get parents to come to the school is by having their children participate in some school events. Parents are more inclined to come to school if their children are taking part in an event. This is true with some of the family and community

involvement events at Sandusky Elementary such as the “Evening with the Arts”, the “Walk-A-Thon” and the “Field Day”. One of the parents described how

“That [parent involvement events] was something kids participate in, some events that they put on or do where they are looking for an audience. Something that you come and watch the children do, sing or I mean anything like that. Its been the greatest draw for getting parents to come in”

the children’s participation in school events draws them into the school.

Barriers to family involvement

1. Most parents work

This is the most common barrier mentioned by the interviewees. The “Evening with The Arts” program has

“There are also a lot of families where moms and dads work and that’s a barrier. If you work from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and your child goes to school from 8:30 a.m. to 3:10 p.m., where are you able to get away from the work site to go and enjoy activities associated with your child’s schooling. So, that’s a barrier”

attracted a lot of parents because it was held in the evening. The parents sold more than 300 spaghetti dinners that evening. According to the school superintendent, there are many dual-income families and it's hard to get these parents into the school during their working hours.

The PTO president expressed her concerns that employers should do their part to offer opportunities for their employees who are also parents to get involved in schools.

"I think our society as a whole has got to do more to get businesses and working places to support parents to get involved in their children's education. I am a state employee and we have about eight hours of leave per year to volunteer . . . The work place has got to do something"

The director for community relations from Lynchburg City Schools administration who oversees the school-business partnerships program said that they encourage companies who have partnerships with schools in the school system to support family involvement initiatives in schools.

"We try to encourage companies that are doing partnerships to provide release time for parents, if they have employees that are parents, so that they can spend some time with their children in the school"

2. Lack of transportation

Another common barrier cited by the teachers and parents is the lack of reliable transportation among the so called "at-risk" families. In one of the interviews with the Wrap Around Specialist from Sandusky Elementary, it was revealed that the common denominator among most "at-risk" students is poverty. He also said that out of the 39 "at-risk" students identified in the school, only five of them have transportation of some

sort. The city bus that comes to the school stops operating after six o'clock in the evening, making it unusable for most evening meetings.

The investigator did not see many parents from the inner-city school zone during the "Evening with The Arts." It was learned that the school's administration has initially planned to send buses to pick parents up from the inner-city areas. The plan was called off by the principal at the last moment. According to the principal, the Director of Transportation for Lynchburg City Schools has no objection to providing buses for those parents, but he has stated a few concerns from his experiences when working with parents from another housing complex related to an event like this. One teacher expressed her disappointment over this matter.

"I was disappointed that the bus didn't go to the inner-city. It disqualified an enormous population that could have come. A lot of them don't have reliable transportation . . . I do think that they have a feeling of having been set apart. That for them, this is not a neighborhood school. That's my feeling. I felt bad for my students that couldn't come"

There are numerous ways the school or the school system has tried to overcome the transportation barrier. It has been a common practice for schools in the system to arrange transportation for parents for those disadvantaged families whenever there is a special event scheduled. The Wrap Around Specialists often provide transportation for parents to come for parent-teacher conferences. The supervisor for Wrap Around Specialists has worked with the City Transit Authority to get free passes for parents who need them. There has been a suggestion to the City Transit Authority to alter the bus route so that the bus will come by the school, but so far no changes have been made.

3. Parents feel intimidated due to their own bad experiences

According to the Wrap Around Specialist at Sandusky Elementary, who has been dealing with the “at-risk” community for the past five years, the main reason for the lack of involvement from those disadvantaged families is the feeling of “fear” to come to the school.

“And the problem with the lack of parent involvement is the fear of not knowing what is going to happen when they get into the school or the fear of not knowing who is going to be there. They fear that”

The resource teacher for the Parent Center also cited the feeling of “fear” as a barrier to the involvement of the disadvantaged families in the school.

“There may be a fear because their experience when they were children was not pleasant coming to school. And so, coming into a school building is just a negative feeling. They grew up with it and so its intimidating for them to walk to the door and come and ask for help”

4. Negative attitude: Some parents just don’t care

There are some parents who just don’t care, no matter what the school or the school system has initiated to involve them. The resource teacher at the Parent Center has tried many ways to involve parents, but with very little success. On one occasion, she stayed late at the center after school hours until 5:30 p.m. She did that twice a month, every month from September to May and she had only two families come to see her.

On another occasion, she had a workshop on a Saturday and there were one hundred and twenty families who expressed their desire to attend the workshop. She prepared breakfast and lunches for 150 people and only 14 people turned up. She has tried all the ways she could think of to reach out to these parents.

“We even had a workshop on a Saturday and I had a hundred and twenty families saying that they would come. We provided buses, breakfast, lunch and fourteen people showed up. And I had, you know, bag lunches for a hundred and fifty people . . . And nobody rode the buses. We had two buses go to pick up the families and nobody rode the buses. I don’t know what else we could do. We were providing babysitting for that workshop . . . We did everything we could think of. I sent reminders out, the week before the workshop so that they wouldn’t forget . . . I don’t know what we can do, you know”

One teacher looked at the role of the school from another perspective. She commented that there should be a limitation in trying to reach out to parents.

“Well, I see the need for their involvement, but I also have feeling that we do an awful lot for children all the time and we do an awful lot for parents and I think there is a point where the parent has to step up and accept the responsibility. As far as saying may be giving the parent transportation to get here, I am not sure I am agree with that”

The school guidance counselor commented on an occasion where they did an on-site parenting workshop at one of the federally subsidized housing complexes several years ago. The parents did not take advantage of the school’s initiative.

“We went on site twice a month. We went there with parenting skills. The manager of the area had done spaghetti dinners. These people had to walk three minutes to the place that we had it and they didn’t show up. I mean, it’s not like they needed transportation. We were right there on site. I think we may have an average of, at the most, ten people”

5. Lack of communication

There are certain communication barriers cited by parents and teachers. These barriers include the use of educational jargon by teachers when talking to parents,

parents have no telephone, parents do not respond to notes sent home by the school or teachers, and parents do not know what to ask for. One of the teachers said the use of educational jargon might make parents feel uncomfortable.

“I think sometimes that teachers, I don’t think they intend to do this, but speak in educationese where they will use words that you and I are familiar with, but they throw them at the parents and they [the parents] don’t quite understand and they don’t feel comfortable enough to say, ‘What are you saying?’ ”

Effects of family involvement

1. Better educational and social progress

Parents and teachers generally agree that students whose parents are involved in their education tend to exhibit better educational and social progress. One of the Chapter One teachers cited a specific example of the effect of family involvement for her students. According to her, students whose parents are involved managed to exit the Reading Recovery Program at a faster pace.

“My four original children [students], the three that got the help at home exited the program [the Reading Recovery program] from anywhere from the second grade reading level where they should have been. The one child who did not get the help at home did not get to exit the program. We kept him another month. At the end of that month, he exited, but at a low first grade level”

Due to the budgetary constraint, the school system cannot afford to hire a full-time art teacher for every school. The “art moms” help out in Sandusky Elementary so that the students could have art every week. This is not the case in the other two schools

that the part-time art teacher is also covering. With the involvement of “art moms” at Sandusky Elementary, the art teacher noticed that the students in this school are more mature, more confident, more experienced with materials and media when compared to her students of the other two schools.

2. **Boost self-esteem of the children**

Almost all the parents interviewed said their children like them to come into the school. The kids are proud when they see their parents in the school. The principal spoke about the effect on the children when their parents come into the school.

“I think too, it helps self-esteem. The children are proud when their mother take of from work to come in to read or their dad come in to talk about what he does in his job”

The third-grade unit leader commented that students whose parents are involved in the class tend to be more successful. According to her, sometimes parents are the ones who initiated the conferences.

“I can tell you that the children who are the most successful in the classroom are the children whose parents I have seen for conferences and those I’ve talked with on a telephone. Sometimes it was the parents who instigated the conferences. Those parents who are here when we offer opportunities for them to come, their children are the most successful in the classroom”

The school parent coordinator feels good that she was able to offer some emotional support to the students by getting involved in the school.

“I just walk into the class and the whole bunch of little kids will come up and hug me. There are a lot of children in public schools today who don’t get that hug”

3. Kids go to a better school

Parents are involved in a lot of fund raising projects. They help to raise money for the school. The investigator observed two PTO meetings in the school while in the field. In both instances, requests were made to the PTO to buy furniture for the school and to get certain teaching aids for the classrooms. The PTO also raised money through fund raising projects like the “Walk-A-thon” and Book Fairs. Such involvement benefit the school and ultimately the effects will

go to the students. According to the supervisor for the volunteer services, the system-wide volunteer program is just like icing on the cake, which makes the school system better.

“So to me, they [the volunteers] support and extend so much further what the school budget will allow. There are lots of things that happen in our schools that parents raise money for, or provide the labor to get done, or just simply give extra helps to either staff or students. And these things make our school system better and to me is the icing on the cake. The cake is going to be here because we’re going to have a good system but volunteers ice the cakes. They make it better by what they do”

4. Teachers have more positive feelings about their job

The school librarian has accomplished two major tasks with the help of parent volunteers. She was proud that, with the help from the parents, the school was able to get the library fully computerized over the period of 1 ½ years without having to close it down. The second event was when the library was to be

“Without the parent volunteers, I could not effectively run this library. I rely heavily on their help. I have trained parents to discard books, to barcode books and to do basically almost anything that needs to be done as far as the paper work so that I can be more accessible to the students and teachers for help”

renovated to put in new carpets several years ago. Many parents turned up during the family night “Adopt-A-Shelf” to get all the books back on the shelves. Even now, with the help of five regular parent volunteers during the normal school hours, she can devote more time to attend to the needs of teachers and students.

One of the school unit leaders looks at this support from the teacher’s perspective. The work of teachers is made a lot easier when parents are involved in their children’s education because they do not have to waste their time dealing with disciplinary problems of their students.

“It can make your job easier. If you have the support of parents, communication with parents, discipline usually is not a factor in the classroom which makes your job easier. If I can spend six and a half hours of my day teaching and instructing rather than being a disciplinarian, I feel like I accomplish a whole lot more. If you have supportive parents, very often you don’t have to worry about spending so much time in disciplining. You also get good response at homework. The follow-up and that extra practice at home make your job easier when children have some carry-over to what they’ve done in the day, they get help within at home at night and the next day is easier to go on with the sequence of your lessons”

5. **Better communication between the school and the community**

The school administration can have a better understanding about the parents and the community when there is an active parent and community participation in the school. According to the assistant superintendent (Curriculum and Instruction), there is an opportunity for a dialogue with the community about public education. In many instances, with the parents’ involvement, the school administration can

“I think too it keeps me more aware of what’s going on in the community and what parents’ questions are, be they real or false, but the general impressions of what is going on in the school and the school programs . . . I think it helps in that parents now feel a lot more comfortable than they did ten or fifteen years ago. Ten or fifteen years ago, I had very few parents in my school that would refer to me as anything but Mr. X. Now they call me Jack, you know, its a more informal kind of relationship”

settle an issue before it becomes a real problem, and the parents feel a lot more comfortable to voice their concerns. Parents now even call the principal by his first name.

6. Keep track of children’s academic progress and social behavior

Almost all the parents agreed that the main reason for them to get involved in the school is that it enables them to monitor their children’s performance both academically and socially.

“And also you get to monitor your child’s progress because you are a parent. You can see, you know, what they are doing and I like that. I like being able to know how he is doing and I will frequently ask my children’s teacher, “Is he or she behaving? How is their school work going?” And if there is a problem, we are able to talk about it. So, I feel comfortable calling them on the phone if I have to. I just recommend for any parents to be involved”

One parent expressed her concerns over drugs and violence in the public schools. She wants to be in the school to make sure that her child is safe.

“We have heard many stories about public schools since my first child started kindergarten. I want to be in the school to make sure that my child is safe”

Impact of policy on family involvement

1. Parents’ satisfaction with the school/division policies on family involvement

Parents are generally happy with the school or division policy on parent involvement. The division has a school board policy (See Appendix R for Policy 2-20 regarding the purpose and role of PAC) that requires every school to have a Parent Advisory Council in addition to the PTO Board. On the division-wide conference day,

teachers work from 1:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. to accommodate working parents' schedule. The school division has tried to coordinate the PTA/PTO meeting schedule for all the schools in Lynchburg City (See Appendix S for the policy).

Elementary schools	second week of each month
Middle schools	Third week of each month
High schools	First and fourth weeks of each month

The in-coming PTO President is happy with the current School Board policy on family involvement.

"I haven't seen any major conflicts along with the current policies. I haven't heard real complaints from the parents where there is a conflict. So, I'm not sure if what we are doing now is wrong because I haven't seen things that indicate that something is wrong"

2. Programs that require family involvement

There are two programs at Sandusky Elementary that require the participation of parents. According to one of the Chapter One teachers, she has eight students who are in the "Reading Recovery" program. These students are supposedly the eight first graders at the bottom of the reading performance scale. The program requires parents of students who are in the "Reading Recovery" program to work with their children on homework at home on a nightly basis.

I am doing something called 'Reading Recovery' and in this program we work on a one-on-one basis with the student. Before we start the program, we bring the parents in and we tell them this is a joint effort. I am going to do my part in the school, the child is going to do his part, and the parents have to do their part. Every single night, the child has a homework bag to take home to work with their parents. I have got about 75% participation from the parents"

According to the violin teacher, parents of Kindergarten through third grade classes need to come with their children to violin sessions if they are enrolled in the violin class. Parents of students from third, fourth, and fifth grades do not have to be actively involved in the lessons

themselves but they just need to see that the children practice and attend concerts.

“I’m their teacher for twice a week, but the parents are there every day, seven days a week. So, parent is a sort of a ‘home teacher’”

Gender imbalance

1. The use of gender-biased terms

Throughout the investigator’s observation, it was found that participants in most of the school events are predominantly the students’ mothers. Many of the regular volunteer jobs in the school are filled by mothers such as the “art moms”, the “room moms”, and the “reading moms”. There was one occasion when a dad was present in one of the meetings for “art moms” and when they realized his presence in the middle of the meeting, they changed the term to “art parent”.

“When we have the ‘art moms’ meeting, they’ve said ‘art moms’ and I just let it, you know. I laughed at it and they kept going. They were saying, ‘You all art moms’ and then they realized that they had a guy in there and they get to laugh and said ‘I am sorry and dad’ ”

2. **Symbolic participation**

Participation by fathers in some of the school events is perceived to be “symbolic” in nature. Their presence in the school is considered not obligatory.

“I know one little girl in a third-grade class, her dad came today to help cook. And because he wanted to do one thing with her before the end of the year because her mom comes to all the parties and all that”

Chapter V

Discussion, Conclusion, Implications for Practice, and Recommendations for Future Research

Introduction

The investigator carried out an in-depth study on the process of family involvement at Sandusky Elementary School. The 20 visits to the site and the use of various sources of evidence have shown that the school has comprehensive family involvement programs and initiatives. The first person whom the investigator met during the first visit to the study site was a mother. It is common to see parents listening to students read in the lobby area, reading to the students in the classrooms, or helping the school librarian in the library.

The sections in this chapter are discussion, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. The investigator used the components of the research questions to guide the discussion on how all the family involvement programs and activities were put into place.

Discussion

How the school and community members get families to participate in their children's education.

This study shows that the administration of Sandusky Elementary School recognizes family involvement as a part of the educational process in the school. The

principal creates the type of school culture that allows family and community members to come into the school and take part in their children's education. Teachers in the school create a variety of opportunities for parents and community members to participate within and outside the classrooms. The principal realized that not all parents feel comfortable or have the luxury of time to come and participate in the school building. Therefore, teachers are deliberately encouraged to plan the kind of interactive homework that encourages parents to work with their children at home. When asked about how they get involved with their children's education at home, most parents said that they supervise their children's homework. The Lynchburg City Schools' Homework Hotline provides opportunities for parents to clarify matters related to homework assigned by the teachers.

Parents in the school system are also provided the opportunities to get involved at division-level activities. The central office administration supports family involvement by inviting parents to serve on division-level task forces. The parents can also sit in on committees of the Superintendent's Advisory Councils in addition to the Principals' Advisory Councils.

The business-school partnerships program in Lynchburg City Schools dominates the community involvement in the schools. The involvement of grandparents at Sandusky is another aspect of community involvement.

The Lynchburg volunteer services through the leadership of its supervisor makes use of 40 high school students to help teachers in the classrooms. This is another aspect

of community involvement in Lynchburg City Schools.

The findings of this study reinforce the literature on family involvement which suggests that schools need to reach out to parents and the community. Sandusky Elementary as well as the school division use multiple approaches to reach out to families and communities. In situations where families are difficult to reach, administrators from both the school and central office extend their efforts by bringing the family involvement activities into the communities.

Some of the school or division-level family involvement initiatives have produced little success in spite of efforts to reach out to all the families. This study has identified several barriers to family involvement initiatives. It was found that the barrier to family involvement cited in most of the interviews is the parents' busy work schedule. Another barrier that prohibits parents from coming to the school, especially those from the "hard-to-reach" families, is the lack of reliable transportation. Parents and family members from those "hard-to-reach" families feel intimidated about coming into the school due to their own bad experiences when they were in schools. The findings also indicate that some parents did not participate in spite of the school system's efforts to reach them. The participation of family members from this segment of the school population is found to be minimal. The Wrap Around Specialists have been specifically designated to work with these "hard-to-reach" families. These Wrap Around Specialists managed to help those "hard-to-reach" families to fulfill their obligation of providing the basic needs for their children, but nothing more.

Sandusky Elementary, with the help of the Lynchburg central office, tries to overcome these barriers. There are variations in terms of success on such interventions. Some of the “hard-to-reach” families remain uninvolved regardless of efforts to overcome the barriers.

The findings of this study indicate that family involvement at governance and decision levels is still far from satisfactory. The Sandusky Elementary principal and the school parent coordinator admitted that there is no indication of parents’ participation in the governance of the school. The involvement of parents or community members is limited to providing inputs during the decision-making processes.

Ways to reach out to those “hard-to-reach” families.

Interviews with administrative staff from the Lynchburg central office, the principal, teachers, parents, and community members suggest that it’s difficult to get those “hard-to-reach” families into the school. The principal indicated that the most difficult aspect for him in his work with parents is to get those from the “at-risk” families to participate in the school. The Wrap Around Specialists of Lynchburg City Schools help to connect families with social agencies, and the school. The Wrap Around Specialist at Sandusky used multiple ways to reach out to parents, such as by making home visits, bringing parents to school for parent-teacher conferences, and working with social agencies to provide basic needs for the “at-risk” families.

Whenever there are barriers to involving families from the “at-risk” population,

the Wrap Around Specialists would try to break those barriers. There are some parents who would never come to the school even though they are expected to do so. The Wrap Around Specialist made repeated home visits to reach them. The Wrap Around Specialist, when requested by teachers, also brought parents to the school for parent-teacher conferences.

Impact of Classroom or school-level policies on family involvement.

Parents generally feel welcome in the school. During the course of the interviewing process, no parent cited a classroom or school-level policy that has prohibited their getting involved in the school. Interviews with parents revealed that they all feel welcome to come into the school (See also Appendix T for results of a parent survey conducted at the end of 1992-93 school year by Sandusky Elementary). The principal at Sandusky Elementary School adopts an “open-door” policy where parents or community members can come into the school any time during the school hours. Observations at the site also show that parents and community members are free to come into the school building any time they want to see their children. Reviews on documents on School Board policies do not indicate any specific details on regulations related to family involvement. The documents especially in the principal’s annual plans, School Board policies, and Volunteer Handbook do support the inclusion of parents and community in the educational process of the school system.

Effects of family involvement.

Family involvement in the school and at home have benefited administrators, teachers, parents, and students in different ways. By having the parents or community members in the school, the administrator becomes more responsive to the needs of the parents and the community. The superintendent wants the parents' voices to be heard. The principal is ready to address issues raised by the parents.

The teachers are able to carry out their duties effectively with the involvement of the children's families. The teachers at Sandsuky Elementary perceived parents' involvement in the school as a resource for them. The investigator also observed that parent volunteers help out teachers in many ways during family involvement events such as the "Odyssey of the Mind" presentations, "Learning Incentives" activities, "Field Day," and the reading activities.

Parents who are involved in the school tend to develop a positive relationship with the teachers and the principal. By having such relationship, they feel comfortable to voice their concerns to the teachers and the administration. By getting involved in the school, parents are also able to supervise their children's studies effectively at home.

It is agreed by the principal, teachers and parents that children tend to perform better academically, socially, and emotionally when their parents are involved in the school and at home. Family involvement tends to improve the condition of the school as a learning institution as a whole. It is evident that when family and community members are involved in the school, students will benefit in the long run. A good example of this

is, the parents at Sandusky Elementary play the advocacy role by acting as “art moms” during the week when the part-time art teacher is not in the school. This enables the students of the whole school to have art lessons every week.

Leadership that promotes family involvement.

The principal at Sandusky Elementary promotes the type of school culture that welcomes parents to participate in the school. Teachers in the school generally welcome parents and are able to work cooperatively with them. The school guidance counselor is actively involved with family involvement initiatives in the school. It was also determined from this study that parents, when given the opportunity in the school, can work independently to promote family involvement initiatives. The leadership within the school was reinforced by encouragement from the central office. In short, there is no one person who is solely responsible for promoting family involvement in the educational process of the children. The principal sends the message to the teachers, teachers welcome the parents, and the parents carry out their responsibilities and obligations, and every step in the process is supported by the central office.

Resources that support family involvement initiatives.

The findings indicate that specific resources have to be set aside to promote family involvement in schools. Lynchburg City Schools have provided various resources to promote and enhance family involvement initiatives in the school system.

These commitments include the allocation of staffing resources which has involved creating administrative posts such as: supervisor for volunteer services; director for community relations; and the supervisor for Wrap Around Services. The Lynchburg City School system also funds the Parent Center at R.S. Payne Elementary, which provides services to all the parents in the city.

The Lynchburg City School system has a long tradition of a division-wide school volunteer program. The Lynchburg school administration has designated a paid employee, the supervisor for volunteer services, to oversee the program. The supervisor coordinates the program by working closely with parent coordinators in every school. These parent coordinators are parents who are responsible for promoting, organizing, and coordinating the program in that school. The supervisor for volunteer services maintains an ongoing evaluation of the program by requiring building-level parent coordinators to submit reports to her on a regular basis.

The director for community relations supervises the Partners in Education program in the school system. Most of the resources that were generated through the programs have been in middle schools and high schools come in the form of technology education labs, software programs, hardware and curriculum development.

The Lynchburg City School system began fully funding the Wrap Around Services in 1993. This is a valuable resource for schools to deal with the “hard-to-reach” families. Findings of this study show that without the help of the Wrap Around Specialist, the school would not be able to reach out to certain segments of the school

population. There needs to be someone designated in the school to deal directly with the “at-risk” families. The faculty and staff from the school do not have the time and hands-on expertise to work with this population.

The Parent Center at R.S. Payne Elementary is providing valuable services to the parents and family members of the preschool or elementary schools. There is a paid resource teacher at the center to help parents locate books, games, video tapes or worksheets that are appropriate for the child’s level at school. The resource teacher also offers consultation to parents on things that they can incorporate into their regular activities that reinforce skills taught in school.

The Lynchburg City School system offers various mini-grants through Lynchburg Education Foundation for teachers and parents to promote parent-related activities, such as parenting workshops. Sandusky Elementary was able to conduct an on-site parenting workshop at a federally subsidized housing complex with the availability of the funds from the Foundation. The parent-initiated “Evening with the Arts” was also funded by a grant made available to parents by the Lynchburg Education Foundation.

The findings of this study clearly point out that there needs to be some resources allocated specifically for parent-related programs. The allocation of such resources will help to promote family involvement initiatives. This study indicated that resources in terms of staffing will help schools to get those “hard-to-reach” parents to participate in their children’s education.

Gender imbalance.

It was not the intention of the investigator to look at this issue when conducting this study. The lack of participation from fathers incidentally emerged from the interview transcripts and observational field notes. Some of the volunteer jobs in the school are found to be biased in terms of gender. Terms like “room moms,” “reading moms,” and “art moms” are widely used by the teachers and parents. Observations on family involvement events at Sandusky Elementary show that the participants in those events consisted mainly of students’ mothers.

Analyses of interview transcripts also show that parents and teachers generally expect mothers to be involved in the school rather than fathers. The presence of fathers is more symbolic in nature.

Conclusions

The case study at Sandusky Elementary School in Lynchburg, Virginia, has produced the following conclusions. It was found that the school has a comprehensive set of family involvement programs and initiatives. The criteria for selecting this school were based on the conditions that the family involvement programs and activities were comprehensive, innovative, and include parents of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The findings of this study showed that those elements were present in the family involvement programs and initiatives at this school. The leadership in the school system as a whole has welcomed parents to be involved in the educational process of the

children. The principal and teachers, in particular, play a vital part in adopting an “open-door” policy to allow parents and community members to become part of the educational process of the students. The openness of the school provides an opportunity for active parent volunteers to initiate their own family involvement programs and activities independently.

Family involvement doesn’t exist in a vacuum. The availability of resources in terms of funding and staffing help to promote the involvement of parents and community in the educational process of the children in a more systematic and comprehensive way. Students from disadvantaged families have also benefited from such allocation of resources.

The involvement of parents in the school not only benefits their own children, but also helps other children by supplementing the resources of the school. The sharing of responsibilities among the schools, parents, and the community helps to enhance the educational progress and social development of the children.

Implications for practice

This study has produced numerous findings. It is based on these findings that the following suggestions will be recommended to public schools for implementations. Specific suggestions will be presented under each category of the study findings.

Necessary elements for family involvement.

1. Administrators and teachers need to recognize that schools belong to the community. They need to make parents feel comfortable to come into the school and allow these parents various opportunities for involvement. They need to provide additional assistance and encouragement for parents to help their children in the school to create a culture that encourages participation.

Leadership that promotes family involvement.

1. State departments of education should work with school divisions to expand the definition of meaningful family involvement that goes beyond traditional roles of parents and schools. Family involvement programs or initiatives that support parents as decision-makers and advocates should be identified, documented and evaluated to provide model approaches to other school divisions.
2. Family involvement needs to be considered as a high priority in state certification or teacher education and principal preparation programs. Family involvement training needs to adopt innovative methods and be integrated into the curricula.
3. The principal is one of the key factors in promoting family involvement in schools. They should send the message to the teachers that parents of all income levels and ethnic backgrounds should be involved in their children's education. It should be a collaborative effort between teachers and parents.
4. Schools should recognize that parents can generate family involvement

initiatives on their own if they are given the opportunity. The openness adopted by a school will allow parents to play the role as active educational leaders in school.

5. State departments of education need to develop a plan to implement a comprehensive program of family involvement across all grade levels. The programs should provide information on ways to involve parents in helping the school, both within and outside the classroom. A staff member from the central office should be designated to oversee the program.
6. Most of the parents who have been interviewed in this study got involved at home by supervising their children's homework. Parents should be provided with knowledge of techniques designed to help children in learning at home so that they can play the role as teachers at home. Such assistance at home may be essential for many minority and disadvantaged parents, for whom involvement in school is an intimidating and difficult proposition. School administration offices with the help of state departments of education should provide in-service training and materials to teachers on designing interactive home-learning activities that encourage parents to monitor and assist their children at home.

Resources needed to promote family involvement.

1. State departments of education can provide training to administrators and teachers on strategies for school-family partnerships. They can do this by organizing seminars, training through cable or satellite television and networking

with institutions of higher learning.

2. School divisions need to make commitments by deliberately helping public schools to work with “hard-to-reach” families. Staff should be specifically assigned to work with “at-risk” students in schools so that there is more interaction with students from this population.
3. State departments of education should support interagency collaboration on family involvement with cooperation from social, health, or youth services. Schools can form an alliance with other agencies to help families.
4. School divisions can offer release time for teachers to interact with colleagues both inside and outside their school division who have implemented innovative family involvement programs or activities. They can also provide incentives in terms of grants for teachers and administrators to carry out action research.

Reaching out to parents.

1. Schools should communicate with families from a positive perspective. They should find ways to get into the communities of the disadvantaged families. Principals and teachers should use various techniques and strategies to improve two-way communication between home and school.
2. Volunteer jobs in schools should be targeted to both parents. Principals and teachers should send the notion to the parents that both parents should play their roles in their children’s educational process. The use of gender-biased terms such as “room moms,” “reading moms,” and “art moms” should be

replaced by neutral terms which would encourage more fathers to participate in the school.

3. Whenever barriers to family involvement exist, schools and school divisions should generate creative ways to break those barriers.

Effects of family involvement.

1. School Boards should find ways to demonstrate the effects of family involvement to parents. Schools that have benefited from family involvement programs or initiatives should share their experiences with other schools. This can be done by creating a family involvement network within the state. Central office administration needs to update family involvement programs in public schools by highlighting innovative and comprehensive programs. Exemplary family involvement programs should be recognized at both state and division levels.

Effect of policy on family involvement.

1. School divisions should play appropriate roles in promoting family involvement in public schools. Regulation by mandatory means should only be applied when necessary. Parents feel more comfortable to participate if they sense the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

Recommendations for future research

One of the inquiries of this study is to look at how some of the family involvement initiatives have been geared toward the "hard-to-reach" families. The

investigator did not have the time and the resources to pursue this aspect in greater depth. During the data collection phase, it was noted that the school principal, teachers, and parents have been and are interested in finding ways to involve the “hard-to-reach” families. Literature reviews on family involvement have shown that parents from the “hard-to-reach” families are as concerned as other families in their children’s education. Very few past studies have specifically focused on ways to get the “hard-to-reach” families to participate both in schools and at home. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus on how and what schools and communities should do to get those “hard-to-reach” families involved in the school.

Findings on qualitative research from this perspective will help to suggest strategies for schools to work with the “hard-to-reach” families. In this study, it was revealed by most of the middle-class parents that they are involved in their children’s education because they disagree with the way that their parents were not involved in their own education. For that reason, they want to become more involved and do things for their children that their parents never did for them. They want to send the message to their children that education is their top priority. It is hoped that future research that focuses on the “hard-to-reach” families will help parents from such families to feel better about their children and themselves. When administrators, teachers, and parents from all ethnic and social backgrounds work together and are part of a comprehensive delivery system, students perform better academically and socially.

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APPENDIX A:

**State Initiatives for Family Involvement:
Superintendent's Memo #194**

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P. O. BOX 2120
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23216-2120

SUPTS. MEMO NO. 194
October 29, 1993

INFORMATIONAL

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Joseph A. Spagnolo, Jr.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Doris Redfield, Deputy Superintendent, Policy,
Assessment, Research, and Information Systems

SUBJECT: Request for Information on Successful Parent Involvement
Practices

The Virginia Department of Education, in collaboration with the Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers, has formed a team composed of parents and professionals to look at the factors which contribute to increasing the involvement of all parents in school building activities and the education of their children.

Central to this effort is the identification of local and school-based programs that are effective. Attached is a memo to all school principals and a form requesting descriptions of effective parent involvement programs in your schools. You may wish to share this request with appropriate central office staff who are responsible for parent involvement programs.

A copy of this request for information is being distributed, under separate cover, to all building principals in your division. Directions for the return of this information is included in the memo. If you have questions about this project, please direct them to Mrs. Judy Hudgins, Associate Specialist, Parent Resources, at (804) 371-7421.

JASJr/DR/jwh

Attachment



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2120

RICHMOND 23216-2120

October 29, 1993

Memo to: All School Principals
From: Judy Hudgins, Team Leader
RFP #92-47, Parental Involvement Project
Subject: Successful Parent Involvement Practices

The Virginia Department of Education, in collaboration with the Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers, has formed a team composed of parents and professionals to look at the factors which contribute to increasing the involvement of all parents in school building activities and the education of their children.

We are asking you to help us in this endeavor by briefly listing and describing effective parent involvement programs in your school(s) that you would be willing to share with others. We are interested in your staff resources, staff development, and any documents or other materials that have been useful in increasing parent involvement. Please include the name and address of a contact person who can provide additional program details. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

An information sheet is attached. Use additional sheets if necessary and return this information to PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS, Mrs. Judy Hudgins, Virginia Department of Education, P.O. Box 2120, Richmond, Virginia 23216-2120. You may also fax this information to (804) 786-1703 or use the Virginia's PEN address, jhudgins@vdoe386.vax12ed.edu.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SHEET

Division Name: _____

School Name: _____

♦Please provide a brief description of an effective parent involvement program in your school(s). Include information on your staff resources, staff development, and any documents or other materials that have been useful in increasing parent involvement.

♦Please provide the name, address and phone number of a contact person who would be willing to share information on these resources:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

APPENDIX B:

**Preliminary List of Potential
Schools for the Study Site**

PRELIMINARY LIST OF POTENTIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE STUDY SITE

1. A. W. E. Bassette Elementary School, Hampton City.
2. Coeburn Primary School, Wise Co.
3. D. J. Montague Elementary School, Williamsburg-James City
4. Garland Quarles Elementary School, Winchester City
5. Gretna Elementary School, Pittsylvania Co.
6. Harrowgate Elementary School, Chesterfield Co.
7. Hollymead Elementary School, Albemarle Co.
8. Jefferson-Houston Elementary School, Alexandria City
9. Lee M. Waid Elementary School, Franklin Co.
10. Nelson Elementary School, Newport News City
11. Olive Branch Elementary School, Portsmouth City
12. Sandusky Elementary School, Lynchburg City
13. Willard Model School, Norfolk City
14. Kate Waller Barrett Elementary School, Arlington Co.

APPENDIX C:

**Letter to Potential Site-selection
Panel Members**

Letter to potential site-selection panel members

January 16, 1995

TO: Dr. Margaret Roberts
FROM: Say Fooi Foo
RE: Panel For Selection of Study Site

As part of my doctoral dissertation at Virginia Tech, I would be conducting a case study on family involvement at one of the public elementary schools in the state of Virginia. The data collection process would be carried out as soon as the study site is finalized.

I have suggested in my dissertation proposal that a panel would be set up to help me in the selection of the study site. The proposed panel members are:

1. Dr. Stephen Parson (Associate Professor, VA Tech)
2. Mrs. Judy Hudgins (Parent Resources, VA DOE)
3. Dr. Margaret Roberts (Director of Community Relations, VA DOE)

I have listed 13 schools for my choice of the study site (please refer to the attached list). The choice of an exemplary school in parental involvement programs for the case study will be based on the following criteria:

- Showed evidence of involving parents in children learning.
- Showed evidence of being creative in idea and innovative in technique.
- Comprehensiveness in the programs.
- Encouraged inclusion of parents of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

I would very much appreciate if you could help me to narrow my choice to about six schools. Attached to this memo are the materials related to the schools on my preliminary list. These are taken from the responses to the Superintendent's Memo #194

With your expertise and experience in the field, please feel free to propose any other schools that you feel have met the above requirements but do not appear in the attached list. I would be accompanying Dr. Parson to the meeting at Charlottesville on January 28, 1995. I hope we will have the opportunity to talk over the matter.

Your involvement and cooperation in this matter is deeply appreciated. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

APPENDIX D:
Revised List of Potential School Sites

REVISED LIST OF POTENTIAL SCHOOL SITES

1. D. J. Montague Elementary School, Williamsburg-James City
2. Garland Quarles Elementary School, Winchester City
3. Lee M Waid Elementary School, Franklin co.
4. Nelson Elementary School, Newport News City
5. Sandusky Elementary School, Lynchburg City
6. Willard Model School, Norfolk City
7. Robert Payne Elementary School, Lynchburg City
8. Willard Model School, Norfolk City

APPENDIX E:

**Introduction Letter to Sandusky
Elementary School Principal**

Introduction Letter to Sandusky Elementary School Principal

February 16, 1995

Dear Mr. St. Clair:

I am referring to our conversation through the phone this morning. I wish to thank you for your involvement in this matter in spite of the busy nature of your job.

I am a doctoral student majoring in Educational Leadership from Virginia Tech. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I would be conducting a single case study on family involvement at one of the elementary schools in the state of Virginia. This study is part of the three-phased project funded by Virginia State Education Department. The Education Department has sent out a survey to all local division superintendents (Superintendent's Memo #194, 1993) asking for information on family involvement efforts in the local schools. Information on 281 schools in 130 divisions was compiled, summarized, and reported in the form of a booklet entitled "Directory of Selected Programs of Parent/Community Involvement in Virginia. Sandusky Elementary School is selected as the study site based on the exemplary family involvement programs.

This study will consist of two parts. The first part will describe the family involvement programs that are in place in the school. In the second part, the investigator will analyze the process that was used to bring about those programs. For this study, the investigator will gather data through direct observations, interviews and document analysis.

Your cooperation and involvement in this matter is deeply appreciated. I am looking forward to working with you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

SAY FOO

APPENDIX F:
Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS

PRINCIPAL

FRAMING QUESTIONS	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Could you describe the family involvement programs that are currently occurring in the school?	1
2. Tell me about the people who played a role in bringing these programs into place.	5
3. Imagine for a moment that you were a family member with a child who attends your school. Tell me what specific ways I might be able to get involved with your child's education (both at home and in school)?	1
4. How does the school get all the families (including the hard-to-reach) to participate in their education?	2
5. We are going to do an audit of your school and wanted to find out what resources were being use to support family involvement initiatives. What would we find?	6
6. Could you give me examples of school or classroom policies and practices that help to enhance the family involvement initiatives?	3
7. Could you describe how the family involvement programs have an impact on your roles as school principal?	4
8. How do you perceive the effect of family involvement on teachers, parents, and students?	4
9. How do you evaluate the success of these programs?	1 - 6
10. Do you share these information of family involvement with other schools within your district? With other school districts? If so, how do you share them?	5
11. What barriers have you encountered to involving families in their children's education? What did you do to overcome these barriers? Were you successful?	2, 5

12. Tell me the names of people I should talk with who are knowledgeable about family involvement programs in this school.	Conclusion
13. Is there anything else about family involvement in this school that you want to tell me?	conclusion

TEACHERS

FRAMING QUESTIONS	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Could you describe the family involvement programs that are currently occurring in the school?	1
2. Describe things you do as a teacher specifically to get families to participate in their children's education?	1
3. How do you get all the families involved in their children's education (both in school and at home). We are especially interested in hearing about things that are being done to involve the hard-to-reach families.	2
4. What types of resources and support do you get from the district and the school? How do these resources support and help you to bring about the family involvement initiatives?	6
5. What barriers/problems have you encountered in this school to having successful family involvement? Have you overcome them? How?	5
6. In your opinions, what is the impact of school or classroom policies and practice on family involvement initiatives?	3
7. Tell me why you want parents to get involved in their children's education?	4
8. How do you perceive the effects of family involvement on parents and children?	4

9. How does family involvement impact your job as a teacher? Could you tell me who were the people involved in developing the family involvement initiatives in your school?	4, 5
10. How do you evaluate the success of all these programs?	1 - 5
11. Who are the people who are knowledgeable about your school's family involvement initiatives that I should talk with?	Conclusion
12. Is there anything more about family involvement in your school or community that I should know?	conclusion

PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS

FRAMING QUESTIONS	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Could you describe for me how you think a school can get families to participate in their children's education?	1
2. Tell me more about how your school is getting the families to participate in their children's education.	1
3. What is the school doing to get all the families (including the hard-to-reach) to participate in their children's education?	2
4. How do you think the school and classroom policies and practices in your school have an impact on family involvement initiatives?	3
5. What have you personally done to get all the families to participate (including the hard-to-reach) to participate in their children's education?	2
6. How does the school provide support for family involvement?	6

7. What do you perceive as barriers or problems to getting families get involved in their children's education? (Both in school and at home) What has your school done to overcome these barriers? Are they successful?	1 - 6
8. What initiate you to get involved in your children's education?	4
9. What do you perceive as benefits of family involvement?	4
10. Can you tell me who play a role in bringing all these programs into place in your school? How do they do that?	5
11. What resources have gone into supporting family involvement programs in your school? Where did these resources come from?	6
12. Is there anything else I should know about family involvement in this school or community?	Conclusion
13. Could you give me names of people who are knowledgeable of family involvement programs that I should talk to?	Conclusion
14. Is there a way for me to contact you if I need further clarification?	Conclusion

APPENDIX G:
Interviews and Conversations

INTERVIEWS & CONVERSATIONS

Lynchburg School Administration Office

1. Lynchburg City Schools Superintendent
2. Assistant Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction
3. Supervisor for Volunteer Services
4. Director for Community Relations
5. Supervisor for Wrap Around Support Specialists

Lynchburg Parent Center

6. Resource Teacher for Parent Center

Sandusky Elementary School

7. Principal
8. School Guidance Counselor
9. Teacher in charge of the Westminster-Canterbury Partnerships
10. Violin teacher
11. School Librarian
12. Teacher Leader
13. P.E. Teacher
14. Wrap Around Support Specialist
15. Chapter One teacher I
16. Chapter One teacher II (no transcript)
17. Unit Leader

Parents

18. Carnival Chairperson/In-coming President
19. Library volunteer/Volunteer of The Year
20. Chairperson for Book Fair
21. Library volunteer
22. Parent Coordinator
23. PTO Secretary
24. PTO Treasurer
25. Parent Advisory Council/Superintendent Advisory Council representative
26. PTO President
27. Odyssey of the Mind Coach
28. Reading Mom
29. Students' parents in the violin class

30. Parent Advisory Council, downtown representative

CONVERSATIONS

In addition to the above audio-taped interviews, the investigator also had made several conversations with the following persons:

1. The school secretary.
2. The art teacher.
3. Moms and dads who came to eat lunch with their children.
4. Lynchburg City Schools Parent Coordinator.
5. Grandparent volunteers.
6. Chairperson for the Walk-A-Thon.
7. Parent Volunteers' spouses.
8. A step father who attended the prize giving ceremony on the Field Day.

APPENDIX H:

**Observations of Sandusky
Elementary School Events**

OBSERVATIONS OF SANDUSKY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EVENTS

1. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction briefed a parent on T.C. Miller Magnet School. (3-7-95 9:30 a.m.)
2. Sandusky Leadership Meeting. (3-8-95 7:45 a.m.)
3. Working Committee Meeting for Evening with the Art. (3-15-95 9:00 a.m.)
4. Odyssey of the Mind presentations. (3-15-95 1:30 p.m. and 2:15 p.m.)
5. A visit to Lynchburg Parent Center. (3-16-95 and 3-22-95)
6. Make-It-Take-It File Making Workshop by kindergarten unit teachers. (3-16-95 6:30 p.m.)
7. Parent Advisory Council Meeting. (3-16-95 7:00 p.m.)
8. Bulldog-Wag/Walk-A-Thon. (3-21-95 and 3-22-95)
9. Lunch for faculty and staff prepared by a mom. (Last Wednesday of every month)
10. A mom reading to a class. (3-31-95)
11. PTO Board Meeting. (4-4-95 5:30 p.m.)
12. Evening with The Art. (4-11-95 5:00 p.m.)
13. PTO Meeting. (4-11-95 After the Evening with The Art)
14. Volunteer Breakfast. (4-26-95 8:10 a.m.)
15. Lynchburg City Schools Superintendent reading to the first graders. (4-26-95)
16. Learning Incentive for Math and Science. (4-27-95 1:15 p.m.)
17. Accompanying the Wrap Around Specialist for home visits at the subsidized housing complex. (5-4-95 and 5-11-95)
18. A local baseball player signing autograph for the fifth graders. (5-4-95)
19. Lunch for faculty and staff organized by PTO. (5-11-95)
20. Parent Advisory Council Meeting. (5-11-95 7:00 p.m.)
21. Book Fair. (5-16-95 10:30 a.m.)
22. Field Day. (5-16-95)
23. A violin class in session. (5-23-95)
24. PTO Executive Meeting. (5-23-95)
25. Hot Dog Lunch. (11:00 a.m.)

APPENDIX I:
Documents Related to Family Involvement

DOCUMENTS RELATED TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

1. School Board Policies: homework, Parent Advisory Council, volunteers, PTA/PTO meeting schedule.
2. Parent Center: Parent information card, Parent Center Newsletter.
3. Partners in Education: Central Virginia Laboratories & Consultants, Nations Bank, PIP Printing and McDonald's.
4. Parent involvement programs: Bulldog-Wag, Parent Career Month, Reading Incentive, Westminster-Canterbury Writing Contest and Giving Tree.
5. Lynchburg City Schools Elementary Parent/Student Handbook 1994-95.
6. School history.
7. Volunteer Handbook.
8. Minutes of meetings: Parent Advisory Council October 20, 1994 and Special PTO Executive Board Meeting December 6, 1994 and PTO Executive Board Meeting January 10, 1995.
9. Lynchburg Volunteer Program.
10. Make-It-Take-It File Workshop.
11. Evening with The Art: Advertisement, grant application, grant approval letter, letters from students to an art mom.
12. Wrap Around Services: Definition, objectives and goals, criteria for identifying at-risk students, monthly report forms.
13. Sandusky Elementary Biennial school plan 1991-1993, 1992-1994, 1993-1995.
14. Lynchburg City Schools Newsletter: SPOTLIGHT.
15. Memos from the principal: Monday and Pineapples from the Principal.

APPENDIX J:
An Example of Multiple Coding System

An Example of Multiple Coding System

[How do you specifically get the parents to be involved, I mean as a person who is in charge of the parent center? How do you get the parents to be involved in their children's education, Is there any way?]

#

Pggy 6A 6.5 rchot brier divrcs ivlhm

Well, its really, really difficult that's the hardest thing. [So what have you done so far?] Well, we have done workshops, you know over the last six years, I have provided workshops, usually two three four a month. This year we decided there is no sanction and doing the all these workshops and parents don't come, so I cut that on the number of workshops that I do. [Your workshops, do you focus on parenting or?] Well, school things or we done one on parent-teacher conferences, helping your child at beginning reader, becoming a better reader. What are the other workshops I have done? We'll be doing one for pre-schools, parents of pre-school children to give them some ideas of things that they can be doing at home to help. Next week I am going to be doing one on testing, and things parents can do to or not do for their childhood achieve better on testing, you know, testing skills.#

[For the workshops, do other parents from other areas come over or you just cater for Payne Elementary parents?]

#

Pggy 6A 7.8 divrcs

Primarily, I am here for pre-schools and elementary school children. [No, those parents, are they from parents from this school or parents from all over?] The whole city. [What is the attendance rate of parents for each of your workshop?] It can be one person or it could be up to I think we had five or six people for one workshop.#

#

Pggy 6A 8.2 brier

It really just the parents on the day, you know, if its rainy outside, I may or may not get people. I really don't know what, if its the subjects but we have done surveys and this is three or four years ago. I sent out a parent survey what we attend to do again asking what days suit you come, what time suit you come, what topics do you want to hear and we kind of pull them together on a computer and I schedule workshops on the days, at the times of the subjects and nobody showed up.

APPENDIX K:

An Example of Retrieved Data on the “Gender” Category

An example of retrieved data on the "gender" category

Rck 14A 4.7 gnder

Ya, it was fun that they had a art thing as you got a lot of moms and that how I got involved but to change it to "art parent". so you know that you kept calling "art moms" and then they would think "Oh, that's right we got a dad in the group" but so then I have used to it either, they have a dad involved sometime. But, I don't know, I think the kids really like the dads to show up because they always see the moms and they, you kind of used to the moms showing up but when dads show up, they really enjoy it. Not only your own child but on the other kids enjoy it too. So, I don't know the men need to get involved too and do things and you know help out. There are plenty of things for them to do, you know to get involved in. A lot of the things that its sometimes may be a little tough for the women to do, you know but the guys can get out here and do it, you know.

Rck 14A 5.7 gnder brier

As far as I am not the parent coordinator I don't know [If you are made the parent coordinator] Just to you know, they can plead with some of our guests and try to get them out here and get them interested. I think. I think, once they get out and see what's going on, they will realize that you know they will like to do it. I think a whole lot of it is they just don't come out, they don't see. I think the ones that come out and see what's going on they stay active because its always the same ones doing, its always the same people [That's right] And if you get more people involved and then I think that it makes it makes the difference but they start coming out more often and doing more things. But again, I'm in other organizations too and then any of those organizations you got a small nuclear of people do everything and the rest just kind of sit back. Its hard to get a 100% I mean you are lucky if get so its like most everything like 30 or 40% of the people that do and then the other 60% just kind of sit back. so, just it doesn't surprise me but I'll like to see more turn out but I don't know, I don't know what to tell you to get these guys out here to do this you know.

Rck 14A 6.8 gnder

I think they feel like sometimes that the you know the room moms sound as big, the art moms and they feel like its women's job but its not. I mean guys have ideas and want to get out here and get involved and I think that's great. And once they were quarreled, they were talking when we have the art moms meeting, they've said art moms and I just let it, you know I just laughed at it and they keep it going and I said [Were you in that meeting?] Ya, you know, they were saying "you are art moms" and then they realized that they had a guy in there and they get to laugh and "I am sorry and dad" but you know, they can't be bothered by me that's involved me, I didn't realize it then I am used to it either. You know, I think kids coming home and say "Dad, why won't you come to school, and meet me for lunch or do this or do that?" I think kids need to do that. For example, today I've something I need to do, my little boy said "Oh dad, come on and meet me, you're off today, come on and meet me at lunch" and how are you saying "no". You know, so you come on up. But I think if they

APPENDIX L:

School Events Showing Participants were Predominantly Mothers

SCHOOL EVENTS SHOWING PARTICIPANTS WERE PREDOMINANTLY MOTHERS

Participants in most of the school special events are predominantly female. The moms were involved in the following scenarios or functions:

1. Room moms, art moms, reading moms.
2. Make-it-take-it file making workshop for kindergarten parents (15 moms and 2 dads).
3. One of the violin sessions (3 moms and no dad).
4. PTO Board meeting on April 4, 1995 (6 moms and no dad)
5. Volunteer Breakfast (more than 20 moms and 1 dad).
6. Learning Incentives for the students (more than 20 moms and, 1 dad).
7. Parent Advisory Council meeting on May 11, 1995 (4 moms and 1 dad).
8. Book Fair helpers (15 moms and no dad).
9. PTO Board meeting on May 13, 1995 (9 moms and 2 dads).
10. Hot Dog Lunch (35-40 moms and 5-6 dads).

APPENDIX M:

**Sandusky Elementary School
Family Involvement Programs/Activities**

SANDUSKY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES

1. Parent resource corner.
2. Bulldog-Wag/Walk-A-Thon.
3. Reading parent - parents read to the students.
4. Reader listeners - parents listen to students read.
5. Field Day - parents help on field day.
6. Art moms - parents rotate with the part-time teacher every other week.
7. Parents assist in Fall registration.
8. Kindergarten Unit teachers parent involvement activities - Kindergarten T-shirts, Make-it-take-it file workshop.
9. Hot Dog Lunch - parents helped to grill hot dogs and served them to the students.
10. Provisions of multi-cultural foods - parents of fourth and fifth graders helped to prepare food.
11. Curriculum enrichment program - reading and math incentives.
12. Media assistance - regular library volunteers.
13. Parent Advisory groups - Principal Advisory Council, Superintendent Advisory Council.
14. School beautification projects - planting plants, flowers and trees.
15. Book Fair - parents help to run the book fair.
16. The Giving Tree - parents and grandparents helped to add books to the library.
17. Parents as tutors.
18. Volunteer Breakfast - breakfast to honor parents.
19. Teachers Appreciation Week - parents showed appreciation by organizing lunch for teachers, giving out flowers and etc.
19. Evening with the Art - parent-initiated hands-on art activities with spaghetti dinners and ballet performance.
20. Parents participate in violin sessions.
21. Odyssey of the Mind presentations - A parent coach one of the teams.

APPENDIX N:

**Business Partnerships with
Sandusky Elementary School**



MASTER PARTNERSHIP

McDonald's

and

Sandusky Elementary School
Sheffield Elementary School



This is a one-year Master Partnership between McDonald's (Wards Road), Sandusky, and Sheffield Elementary Schools. The partnership will be renewed annually upon review and consent of all parties.

A. Plan Description:

This Master Partnership between McDonald's (Wards Road), Sandusky, and Sheffield Elementary Schools is designed to provide recognition and incentives for students and to supplement on-going programs at the schools. McDonald's will provide resources to work with each elementary school's staff, students, and parents.

B. Major Objectives:

1. To encourage students to succeed in school
2. To motivate students in school
3. To promote and recognize good citizenship in students
4. To encourage better school attendance
5. To motivate students to read
6. To help students become aware of career opportunities

C. Major Activities:

1. Sandusky and Sheffield Elementary Schools will provide seasonal student artwork and photographs to be displayed at McDonald's (Wards Road).
2. McDonald's will provide coupons and certificates to support the following school programs: Academic Improvement Certificate, Readers Are Leaders Bookmark, and Study Habit Improvement Award.
3. Students from Sandusky and Sheffield Elementary Schools will provide writing samples for display at McDonald's (Wards Road).

4. McDonald's will participate in each school's career awareness program
5. McDonald's, Sandusky, and Sheffield Elementary Schools will provide representation on the Partnership Planning/Coordinating committee to plan, monitor, and evaluate all partnership activities.
6. McDonald's, Sandusky, and Sheffield Elementary School will promote the partnership in the community and publicize partnership activities through newsletters, press releases, partner visits, PTO meetings and other appropriate company and school publications.

D. Evaluation:

All parties will provide written evaluation of partnership activities by completing a partnership evaluation form at the end of the school year.

E. Partnership Coordinators:

Business/Organization/Institution Representative(s)

Name Jeff G. Chapin Name _____

Name Sandra L. Davis Name _____

School/Division Representative(s)

Name Jacob D. St. Plain Name J. M. Lewis

Name J. M. Lewis Name _____

1-14-1994

Date

Partners In Education Master Partnership



PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School

This is a one-year Master Partnership between PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School. The partnership will be renewed annually upon review and mutual consent of both parties.

A. Plan Description:

This Master Partnership between PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School is designed to enrich the educational experiences of selected students through practical education in life skills and exposure to career opportunities.

B. Major Objectives:

1. To enhance the curriculum for selected students participating in the Project MAGIC Program
2. To support integration of the technology program into the curriculum
3. To provide leadership opportunities for students
4. To provide realistic business/economic experiences for students
5. To provide opportunities for students to explore career options in the graphics/printing industry

C. Major Activities:

1. PIP Printing will provide resource speakers, on a limited basis, to advise and educate the students about the graphics/printing business.
2. PIP Printing will provide field trip opportunities for students participating in the program.
3. PIP Printing will provide technical support and assist in the production of Project MAGIC stationery.
4. PIP Printing will give assistance, on a limited basis, in marketing stationery developed through Project MAGIC program.
5. Sandusky Elementary School will create an environment within the school which will replicate a business setting
6. Sandusky Elementary School will provide student artwork and photographs for display at PIP Printing.
7. Sandusky Elementary School will recognize PIP's contributions and assistance through product advertisements.

8. Project MAGIC students will assist school and PIP Printing advisors in selecting an appropriate activity to celebrate the project, if profits are realized.
9. Project MAGIC students will provide further recognition of PIP Printing and their partnership efforts in achieving their goals.
10. Project MAGIC students, in conjunction with PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School, will advertise their product on cable channel 2 and in "A View From Within"
11. Representative(s) from PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School will serve on the partnership planning committee to plan, monitor, and evaluate all partnership activities.
12. PIP Printing and Sandusky Elementary School will promote the partnership in the community and publicize partnership activities through newsletters, press releases, partner visits, and other appropriate company and school publications.

D. Evaluation:

All parties will provide written evaluation of partnership activities by completing a partnership evaluation form at the end of the school year.

E. Partnership Coordinators:

Business/Organization/Institution Representative(s)

Name Lynda Creswell Name Jack Creswell

School/Division Representative(s)

Name Joseph D. St. Clair Name _____

2-17-95
Date

Partners In Education
Master Partnership
NationsBank
and
Sandusky Elementary School



This is a one year Master Partnership between NationsBank (Wards Road) and Sandusky Elementary School. The partnership will be renewed annually upon review and mutual consent of both parties.

A. Plan Description:

This Master Partnership between NationsBank (Wards Road) and Sandusky Elementary School is designed to provide recognition for students and staff and curriculum enrichment in the areas of the arts, math and science. The Sandusky Elementary School community will support NationsBank (Wards Road) in a variety of ways establishing a positive relationship among students, parents and staff.

B. Major Objectives:

1. To promote increased parent/guardian participation in school programs
2. To reinforce the need to be in school through an incentive program
3. To provide a forum for students' artistic expression
4. To recognize and reward student academic achievement
5. To promote community awareness of Sandusky Elementary School and to enhance school/community relations

C. Major Activities:

1. NationsBank will provide Kennedy half dollars for students with perfect attendance for the school year.
2. NationsBank will provide field trip opportunities for selected students throughout the year.
3. NationsBank will provide savings bonds in support of school initiated incentive programs.
4. NationsBank will provide a gallery in its lobby area to display selected student art works.
5. NationsBank will provide incentives for parents' attendance at P.T.O. meetings.
6. NationsBank will provide classroom readers and judges for student contests.
7. Sandusky Elementary School will provide art work for display at the bank.
3. Sandusky Elementary School will provide entertainment for selected bank functions.

(NationsBank and Sandusky Elementary School partnership cont.)

9. Sandusky Elementary School will provide birthday and holiday-recognition for bank employees and holiday decorations for the bank.
10. A representative from NationsBank (Wards Road) and Sandusky Elementary School will serve on the partnership planning committee to plan monitor and evaluate all partnership activities.
11. NationsBank (Wards Road) and Sandusky Elementary School will promote the partnership in the community and publicize partnership activities through newsletters, press releases, partner visits, and other appropriate company and school publications.

D. Evaluation:

All parties will provide written evaluation of partnership activities by completing a partnership evaluation form at the end of the school year.

E. Partnership Coordinators:

Business/Organization/Institution Representative(s)

Name Tim Seacon Name William H. [Signature]

School/Division Representative(s)

Name Jacob D. Cain Name [Signature]
Date 12/20/14



Partners in Education

MASTER PARTNERSHIP

Central Virginia Laboratories & Consultants and
Sandusky Elementary School



This is a one-year partnership between Central Virginia Laboratories & Consultants and Sandusky Elementary School. The partnership will be renewed annually upon review and consent of both parties

A. Plan Description:

This partnership between Central Virginia Laboratories & Consultants and Sandusky Elementary School is designed to create new opportunities for students.

B. Major Objectives:

1. To establish and reinforce environmental awareness among students.
2. To act as a resource for students to acquire knowledge about reducing, reusing and recycling.
3. To provide students with science related career information.
4. To encourage student interest in science and enhance the science curriculum.

C. Major Activities:

1. A supply of one-hundred (100) recycling boxes will be placed in the school for use in classrooms, and cafeteria.
2. Presentations prior to *Earth Day* will be given to all units about natural vs. man-made products. Presentations will be given by CVLC staff as well as a member of a local recycling center.
3. A presentation following up on recycling and promotions for *Earth Day* will be done that day at a school assembly.
4. Active participation in the *Field Day* events by CVLC staff. CVLC t-shirts will be given as prizes for the events.
5. Planting of flower bulbs near the school will be done in the fall to symbolize the coming of *Earth Day 1993*. This will also promote that environmental awareness is necessary year-round.

D. Evaluation:

All parties will provide written evaluation of partnership activities by completing a partnership evaluation form.

E. Partnership Coordinators:

Business/Organization/Institution Representative(s)

Name _____ *Name* _____

School/Division Representative(s)

Name _____ *Name* _____

Date

APPENDIX 0:

**Mini-grant Approval Letter for
the “Evening with the Arts”**

EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC.
LYNCHBURG CITY SCHOOLS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rev. Haywood Robinson, Jr.
President

Mr. John F. Richards
Vice President

Dr. Barry E. Campbell
Secretary-Treasurer

Mr. James K. Candler

Mr. Ronald V. Doan

Mr. Rodger W. Fauver

Mrs. Aresa S. Langhorne

Dr. James T. McCormick

Mrs. Rosal Schewel

Mr. Kenneth S. White

October 10, 1994

Linda Bush
Sandusky Elementary School

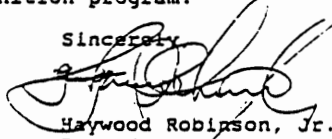
Dear Linda:

On behalf of the Lynchburg City Schools Education Foundation Program, I am pleased to announce the selection of your grant, Evening With the Arts, as an Education Foundation grant recipient for the 1994-95 school year. You are to be congratulated for your creative proposal which was selected from 49 grant applications.

You are invited to a special presentation by the Education Foundation Board when you will be recognized as a 1994-95 Education Foundation grant recipient and receive your grant funding and other related information. The presentation will be made in the board room of the school administration building on Tuesday, October 18, 1994, at 5:30 p.m. A reception to honor the recipients will be held at 5:00 p.m. preceding the presentations.

Again, congratulations for being selected as one of thirteen grant recipients. We look forward to seeing you at the recognition program.

Sincerely,



Haywood Robinson, Jr.
President

HR/rc
cc: Jack St. Clair

"The Lynchburg City Schools, with its Tradition of Excellence, recognizes the uniqueness and worth of all students and will educate each student to be a productive, responsible, and contributing member of a diverse multicultural society."
LYNCHBURG CITY SCHOOLS
MISSION STATEMENT
ADOPTED MARCH 19, 1991

APPENDIX P:
Wrap Around Services Objectives



THE PRIDE CENTER
ADULT AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

1200-1208 Polk Street
Lynchburg, Virginia 24504-3149

RECEIVED
RECEIVED

SEP 1
SEP 1 6

SPECIAL EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 13, 1993
TO: Ann Bond Gentry
Wrap-Around-Services Coordinator
FROM: Carl T. Conner, Jr.
Pride Center, Alternative Student Advisor
SUBJECT: Wrap-Around-Services Objectives

- I. To increase the attendance of any student missing excessive days.
Method: Telephone calls, home visits, student conference, parent conference, letter, use of outside agencies.
- II. To assist students in acquiring employment, job seeking skills, and maintaining the job.
Method: By teaching pre-employment training classes ie., how to fill out applications, interview technique, personal grooming, career assessment, interest inventories, job site visits, explore employee/employer relationships.
- III. To ensure students receive proper support to be successful academically and emotionally.
Method: Refer students to proper agencies for additional help, transport students and parents when necessary, tutor students in various subjects as required, one-on-one and group counseling, demonstrate college application and financial aid procedures.

/mp

cc: Charlene Watson, Pride Center Supervisor

APPENDIX Q:

Criteria for Identifying “At-risk” Students & “At-risk” Student Referral Form

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING AT-RISK STUDENTS

The following criteria will be used to select At-Risk students in the Lynchburg City Schools. In completing the referral form, all criteria areas should be completed and a check placed beside those criteria which qualify a student for the At-Risk program. A check in four of the 11 criteria areas will generally qualify a student for At-Risk status, but in unusual cases, less than four criteria may qualify a youngster. Circle the appropriate family status code: SP = Single Parent; G = Guardian; RS = Residential Setting; BP = Both Parents in the home - if one of these parents is a step-parent, so indicate by checking the (___S).

The initial five criteria are subjective and should be reported on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest mark and five the highest. A score of four or five would qualify a student in a particular criteria area. Criteria six to 11 are quantitative in nature and should be reported with factual information.

1. Behavior Problem (1-5) - Student has been referred for inappropriate behavior by two or more staff members.
2. Attitude (1-5) - Student does not demonstrate a positive attitude toward learning or school.
3. Self-Esteem (1-5) - Student demonstrates a lack of confidence or feelings of personal worth or value.
4. Socioeconomic Status (1-5) - There are indications of economic need.
5. Home-School Relationship (1-5) - There is difficulty in establishing a supportive home-school relationship.
6. Attendance - Record the days absent in the previous school year.
7. Change of Residence - Record the number of address changes in the previous school year.
8. Test Scores - Record the latest Iowa composite score, reading comprehension, and math total scores.
9. Below Reading Level - Indicate the number of years below reading level.
10. Retained in Grade - Report the number of times a student has been retained. One or more retentions would qualify a student.

Under comments include any other information which you think relevant to the student's selection. Community agency participation or special program enrollment should be noted.

AT-RISK STUDENT REFERRAL FORM

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
 SCHOOL _____
 STUDENT # _____ AGE _____ GRADE _____

Educationally At-Risk students are defined as those students who have fallen behind in skills and studies, and have a high probability of not successfully completing formal education. Please check or circle the items below which indicate the student is at risk of falling behind or failing.

TEACHER SECTION:	Low Risk				High Risk
1. _____ Behavior Problems (has received multiple referrals for inappropriate behavior)	1	2	3	4	5
2. _____ Attitude (shows little interest in completing assignments)	1	2	3	4	5
3. _____ Self-esteem/social skills (has difficulty with peers)	1	2	3	4	5
4. _____ Family Support (limited family support for the completion of education)	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: _____

GUIDANCE SECTION:

Iowa scores (if applicable) Read. comp. _____ % Math Tot. _____ % Comp. _____
 _____ Literacy Passport Reading P F _____ # times taken
 Math P F _____ # times taken
 Writing P F _____ # times taken
 _____ Reading below level
 _____ Math below level
 _____ Retentions _____ number of times retained

COMMENTS: _____

STUDENT SUPPORT SECTION:	Low Risk				High Risk
1. _____ Attendance	1	2	3	4	5
2. _____ # days absent in current year Socioeconomic status (status affects performance)	1	2	3	4	5
3. _____ Family support (limited contact with school or support for the completion of education)	1	2	3	4	5
4. _____ Substance abuse	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: _____

PRINCIPAL _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX R:

**School Board Policy on
Principals' Parent Advisory Council**

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Principals' Parent Advisory CouncilA. Purpose

The purpose of the Principal's Parent Advisory Council is to link the community to the school and advise the principal on matters of governance, curriculum, and instruction.

B. Specific Functions

Functions include, but are not limited to .

1. advising (i.e. to provide input regarding curriculum, discipline issues)
2. assisting in planning goals for the school (i.e., annual school goals)
3. researching and gathering information concerning educational innovations
4. assisting in providing support services
5. being a liaison for the school and community
6. disseminating information
7. building support for the school and its goals

The Parent Advisory Council's role is advisory in nature. The principal will consider recommendations, opinions, viewpoints, and suggestions offered by the council.

C. Composition

The composition of the group should reflect the demographics of the students served within the school (i.e., race, socioeconomic level, geographical location). The council should consist of nine to twenty-one members. The council must include the principal, at least one parent who is also on the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, one or two community representatives, and one member from the PTA/PTO Executive Board. Other members may include a parent(s) representing each grade level. Teachers and other staff members will participate at the discretion of the principal.

(continued)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Principal's Parent Advisory Council (continued)D. Meetings

A minimum of four meetings should be scheduled throughout the school year with the first meeting being held before the end of October. Although the principal will develop an agenda for discussions, each council representative may submit items which will be placed on the meeting agenda. Parents should submit topics to the principal through a written communication or telephone call one week prior to each meeting so members can be notified regarding the agenda.

E. Length of Service

The length of service should not exceed two years with appointments being one year in length. Principals should consider a rotation process which provides a source of continuity through relationships which develop between veterans and new council members to work together.

F. Role of the Principal

The principal will serve as the chairperson for the council. It is the responsibility of the principal to provide training for the group which could include getting acquainted activities, consensus building, and discussion of the function of the council. Agendas and meeting minutes will be made available to building staff and council members. Schedule of meetings and copies of agendas for each meeting will be forwarded to the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent prior to the meetings and each principal will forward minutes to the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent following each meeting.

Approved by the School Board: September 1, 1992

(2)

APPENDIX S:
District-wide PTA/PTO Meeting Schedule

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community Involvement

PTA/PTO Meeting Schedule

Except for the month of December, PTA and PTO meetings are to be scheduled in the following manner to avoid conflicts for school patrons:

Elementary Schools	Second Week of each month
Middle Schools	Third week of each month
High Schools	First and fourth weeks of each month

The first week is defined as the first week of the month containing a Monday.

Approved by Superintendent: September 3, 1985
Revised by Superintendent: May 19, 1992
Revised by Superintendent: August 4, 1992

APPENDIX T:

**Parent Survey (1992-93) Conducted
by Sandusky Elementary School**

OBJECTIVE 2:

During the 1992-93 school year, the faculty and staff will strive to improve and expand home/community/school communications. The success of this objective will be determined by a random survey designed to assess the effectiveness of our communication efforts.

Assessment:

At the end of the 1992-93 school year, a survey was sent home with approximately one-half of the students. Those selected to receive the survey were chosen at random. The results of the survey were positive as indicated below:

1. Do you feel that you have been kept adequately informed about your child's progress during the 1992-93 school year?

100% Yes 0% No

2. Do you feel that your child has made appropriate progress during the 1992-93 school year?

95% Yes 5% No

3. Have you found the following valuable?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
Parent/Teacher Conferences	78%	3%	18%
Notes from the Teacher	89%	0%	10%
Newsletters/Newspapers	91%	0%	8%
School Calendar	97%	2%	0%
Phone Calls from Teachers	58%	0%	41%
Monthly "Updates"	86%	5%	8%
Memos from the Principal	86%	2%	11%

4. When you visit Sandusky Elementary do you feel welcome?

100% Yes 0% No

5. Do you think your child feels comfortable at school?

94% Yes 5% No

6. Is the amount of homework your child is assigned appropriate?

91% Yes 8% No

7. What do you like most about Sandusky Elementary and why?

Among the most often cited things parents liked most were the following:

- faculty and staff are warm, friendly, and caring
- made to feel a part of the educational process
- parents are kept informed
- excellent communications
- warm, friendly, welcome atmosphere
- good teachers
- encourages respect among students for self and peers
- special activities and field trips

8. What would you like to change about Sandusky Elementary?

Among the most often cited things parents would like to change are:

- a room for the art teacher and music teacher
- T.V. monitor for every room
- better discipline on buses
- more opportunities for students to use computers

1988 - 1991 Confucian Secondary School teacher
School Counselor
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Activity: Member of the Honor Society of PHI KAPPA PHI
Manager of Clairmont Apartment, Blacksburg, U.S.A.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Say Fooi Foo', written over a horizontal line.

Say Fooi Foo