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# An assessment of the influence of community schools on the attitudes and involvement of urban parents.

Charles Burack

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS ON THE ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT  
OF URBAN PARENTS

A Dissertation Presented

By

CHARLES BURACK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Education

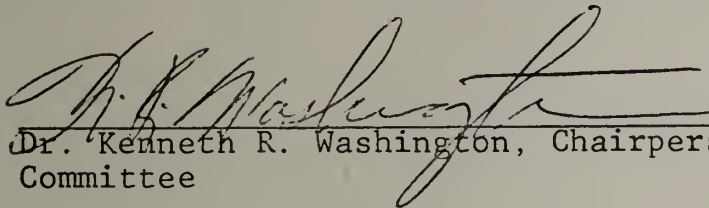
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Approved as to style and content by:

  
Dr. Kenneth R. Washington, Chairperson of  
Committee

  
Dr. Ronald K. Hambleton, Member

  
Charles Kay Smith, Member

  
Dr. Grace J. Craig, Acting Dean  
School of Education

To Shirley:

for her love and support,  
her patience and humor,  
I dedicate this volume.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any academic undertaking requires a prodigious amount of effort on the part of many people. This study was no exception. The writer's sincere thanks go to Dr. Kenneth R. Washington, Chairman of my Committee, for his painstaking review of the various phases of the study. His expert guidance, encouragement and advice will long be remembered. Thanks also are due to Dr. Ronald Hambleton who guided me through the maze of a research project and Charles Kay Smith for his understanding.

A specific appreciation goes to Mrs. Eleanor Dulmaine and Mrs. Elizabeth Farrey, secretaries at the Elm Park Community School, without whose help, understanding, humor and typing skills this undertaking would never have succeeded.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Shirley, and daughter, Lynda, for their cheerful, gentle prodding that provided me the incentive to complete this study.

## ABSTRACT

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS ON THE ATTITUDES AND INVOLVEMENT  
OF URBAN PARENTS

(December 1976)

Charles Burack, B.S. Ed., Worcester State College  
M.Ed., Worcester State College  
Ed.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed By: Kenneth R. Washington, Ph.D.

The goal of this study was to assess the attitude of urban parents and the differences, if any between those parents having children who attend community schools versus those parents whose children attend a traditional neighborhood type school. This study, also, investigated the differences in parental involvement between the two types of schools. In addition, the study sought to determine if community schools had characteristics that could distinguish them from non-community schools.

The data for this investigation was collected from a random sample of the parent population of four community and four non-community schools. There were 240 parents in the sample. 120 in the community school group and 120 in the non-community school group. The population from which the sample was drawn totaled 1500 parents.

The questionnaire employed in the assessment of parent attitudes used a Likert type scale. Items were developed to determine the attitude of parents toward education, their child's school, personnel and curriculum. A check list was used as a second instrument to collect data on community school characteristics.

The following research questions were investigated to determine the effect community schools had on the attitudes held by parents.

1. Is there a difference between community school parents attitudes toward school and the attitudes of the non-community school parent?
2. Is there a difference in parental involvement between community schools and non-community schools?
3. What are the unique characteristics of community schools and are they present in the schools studied?

Subsidiary questions that were considered included a comparison of community school and non-community school parents in the following areas:

1. Will the income of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
2. Will the race of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
3. Will the age of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
4. Will the amount of involvement of the parent or guardian affect the level of positiveness?

With respect to the first research question, it was found that there was a tendency among community school parents to be more positive in their attitude although the differences for the most part were not significant at the



.05 level. An interesting finding was that the attitudes of both groups of parents were positive. This finding suggests that perhaps community schools are not having as great an impact on parental attitudes as the proponents of community schools believed they would.

The results of the analysis for the second research question also yielded an interesting finding. The data showed that neither the community school parents nor the non-community school parents were highly involved with their school. Community school parents, in general, did visit their school more frequently than non-community school parents. The difference, however, was small and in only three out of the ten involvement areas was it significant at the .05 level.

With respect to the third research question, it was found that there were distinguishing traits which made the community school significantly different from the non-community schools. Apparently, the efforts being made to create a different approach to the running of urban schools has resulted in a different type of school. However, the distinguishing traits are being absorbed by the non-community school and, at least on the surface, becoming more difficult to identify. Perhaps the community school is serving as a model of change for the traditional school.

With respect to the subsidiary research questions which examined the influence of age, income, race and level

of involvement on parental attitudes, the data showed that community school parents tended to have a more positive attitude than non-community school parents. However, the differences were not significant at the .05 level. Finally, there was no evidence which would substantiate that a relationship existed between age, income, race or level of involvement and the attitudes held by community school and non-community school parents.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### General Statement of the Problem

In the United States, public education is currently being pressured to develop educational programs that will meet the needs of all children. These pressures have been produced and maintained, in a large part, by vocal critics of school culture who feel that urban schools have failed to provide a suitable education for large numbers of children, the majority of whom are Black and Puerto Rican. Along with numerous other official and semi-official documents, the Kerner Commission Report perhaps best describes the failure of urban schools. This report states that: "for the many minorities and particularly for the children of the racial ghetto, the schools have failed to provide the educational experience which could help overcome the effects of discrimination and deprivation."<sup>1</sup>

Personal accounts attesting to the waste of pupils and the plight of inner-city schools abound. Among the most notable, are the writings of Kozol,<sup>2</sup> Holt,<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 425.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Kozol, *Death at An Early Age* (Boston: Houghton Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 240.

<sup>3</sup>John C. Holt, *How Children Fail* (New York: Pitman Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 181.



Dennison.<sup>4</sup> The authors describe, in telling fashion, the bleak record of the urban school system. Judged by almost any critical factor—number of dropouts, level of achievement, number of college entrants or the frequent decline in I.Q. of inner-city students—the urban schools have failed.

The writings of the above authors as well as the Kerner Commission stress that more resources are needed such as higher pay for teachers, improved teaching materials and newer and better maintained buildings. These suggestions are based, in the main, on the wide disparity in the ability of urban areas to finance schools when compared to many suburban school districts. Knowles and Prewitt, in examining statistics from the Kerner Report, found that per pupil expenditures tend to be much lower in inner-city schools than in suburban schools.<sup>5</sup> They note, for example, that in Michigan the 25 school districts surrounding Detroit spend up to \$500 more per pupil per year to educate their children than does the city of Detroit.

Knowles and Prewitt, however, caution against looking to grants-in-aid to city schools as a solution for the education crisis. They maintain that the major problem with reform groups is that most have failed to distinguish between resources and control of resources. They argue.

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<sup>4</sup>George Denison, *The Lives of Children* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 308.

<sup>5</sup>Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, *Institutional Racism in America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 31.

that reformers often speak of spending money but remain silent about finding ways of sharing power with community people.<sup>6</sup>

The lack of citizen involvement in educational decision making has been identified by a number of school critics as the major reason why urban schools have remained unresponsive to demands for change. Foremost, among these critics, is Jack Minzey who feels that urban schools have failed to include community members in the decision-making process largely because the size of big city schools frustrates attempts at involvement.<sup>7</sup> Further support for this point of view can be found in the Health, Education and Welfare Department's task force on urban education which states that rarely have inner-city community residents had the opportunity to become involved in the significant decisions about the kinds of programs to be implemented in the schools.<sup>8</sup>

The low level of participation in public education by urban residents was caused, Katz argues, in part by the consolidation of school districts that occurred during a period of rapid urban growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup> This consolidation increased

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Jack Minzey, "Community Education: An Amalgam of Many Views," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV Number Three (November 1972), p. 151.

<sup>8</sup>*Final Report of the Task Force on Urban Education to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare*, by Wilson C. Riles, Chairman (Washington, D.C.: Praeger Pub., 1970), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Katz, *Class Bureaucracy and Schools*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 108.



the distance between centralized boards of education, administrators and the local community. Although the larger school districts, in some respects, increased the efficiency of school administration, they also tended to decrease administration responsiveness to the community in such important policy areas as personnel and curriculum. As noted by Katz, centralization caused the schools to become further removed from the community they served and residents had less power to influence decisions.<sup>10</sup>

As a consequence, the consolidation of school districts was perhaps the factor most responsible for the creation of the massive school bureaucracies that now exist in large urban areas. The effect of this bureaucracy on the operation of urban schools has been so disastrous that Kerensky and Melby describe this form of organization as not only ineffective for problem solving but a major problem in itself. They note that the centralization of school districts resulted in the depersonalization of education. The expansion of school organizations grew to such an extent that the bureaucratic organization itself became one of American education's biggest problems.<sup>11</sup> As stated by Washington, "The burgeoning differentiation of functions brought on by

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup>Vasil M. Kerensky and Ernest O. Melby, *Education II—The Social Imperative* (Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing Company, 1971), p. 15.

increased bureaucratization has allowed . . . bureaucrats to discharge the duties of their offices with complete detachment."<sup>12</sup> The intensitivity of urban school bureaucracies coupled with their failure to adequately meet the needs of the people they serve is causing urban parents to press for more citizen participation in school policy making. Urban parents want a voice in the real business of the school--what children are learning and why they are learning it.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, there is an urgency for urban educators to find ways to involve community people in determining educational objectives so citizens themselves can help plan and develop programs. The problems of the urban schools will not resolve themselves until both educators and the community they serve work together in examining the total environment which affects the life of a child in the school. For example, Beach writes that more attention must be paid to other critical determinants in learning, such as health, home circumstances and study, parent attitude and ambitions, student motivation, teacher attitudes and ultimately, to economic factors including employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup> All of these factors significantly affect scholastic performance.

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<sup>12</sup>Kenneth Washington, "Debureaucratizing Urban Schools," *Mejorum*, I (Fall 1974), p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>Donald H. Smith, "Changing Controls in Ghetto Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, II (April 1968), p. 451.

<sup>14</sup>Norton L. Beach, "Control and Change of School Functions at the Community Level," *Review of Education Research*, XXIII (February 1952), p. 32.

Dewey was one of the first educators to link the value of school community accountability and cooperation in maximizing the learning opportunities for students. His philosophy influenced many of the pioneer efforts in community involvement that occurred during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Dewey's laboratory school represented a model effort to prepare students for adult life through viewing the school as a miniature community. His work underscored the interrelatedness of the educational functions of the home, the neighborhood and the school.<sup>15</sup>

Further support for community participation is found in the efforts of William Wirt who was superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana. Larry Decker describes Wirt as an early innovator who developed educational programs that involved parents and adults in school activities.<sup>16</sup> The Gary Plan developed by Wirt, required the school to be open all day and all year with both the school and the community participating actively in the lives of the pupils.

The belief of Wirt was that the school should become a focal point for almost all activities that take place within the community and reflect the needs and wants of that community, namely, the community school concept, led

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<sup>15</sup>John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916), p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>Larry Decker, *Foundations of Community Education* (Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 51-52.

to the gradual establishment of a number of "Community Schools." It was during the period of 1930 to 1950 that several urban communities adopted the community school concept and moved to set up a few demonstration schools.<sup>17</sup> The concept now has national visibility as more educators are stressing the impact that the community school can have upon the locality it serves. As a result, community participation in education decision making is increasingly being viewed as contributing to the schools' potential for meeting the needs of the communities they serve. Since 1964 the idea has spread from identification with a handful of school districts to acceptance by several thousand.<sup>18</sup>

Carmichael and Mario write that the key element in the rapid rise of the community school concept is its overriding goals of involving parents and other interested laymen in as many facets of the schools' operation as possible and to have schools serve as community centers.<sup>19</sup> In order to achieve these goals and to eliminate the widespread feeling of alienation that many adults feel in relation to public schools, the community schools have adopted a philosophy and

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<sup>17</sup>Roger Hiemstra, *The Educative Community* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Professional Educators Publications, Inc., 1972), p. 32.

<sup>18</sup>Minzey, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>19</sup>Benjamin Carmichael and Nito Mario, "Emerging Patterns in Community Centered Schools," *Childhood Education*, XLIII (February 1968), p. 316.



structure that purports to differ from that of traditional schools in several aspects.

The major element in this philosophy is two-way communication between the school and its constituents. Community educators believe that when citizens of a given community become involved in their school, the potential power for change is great. Participation by the clients of the public schools, parents, students and community residents is viewed as representing the emergence of a group which can wield an enormous amount of influence. It is felt that the efforts of these community groups can be combined with that of the professional to bring about needed fundamental reform of urban schools.<sup>20</sup>

Minzey maintains that this potential power can be effectively harnessed by utilizing the community surrounding an elementary school building.<sup>21</sup> He notes that this community is usually small enough to allow for community participation. For example, the smallness of the community makes it possible to develop block club organizations and to identify and recruit community leaders to provide each elementary school area with a representative council. The council members, selected by their neighbors in a representative fashion, provide a vehicle for lay involvement in the

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<sup>20</sup>Mario D. Fantini, "Participation, Decentralization and Community Control," *National Elementary Principal*, XLVIII (April 1969), p. 25.

<sup>21</sup>Minzey, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

school.<sup>22</sup> It seems clear that once the community school council is established at the elementary school level, the possibility exists for developing a similar structure encompassing a larger area by building on representation from the elementary units. Thus, by the pyramiding of neighborhoods, power could be exerted through district "community control." The greater community would then become aware of the need to involve all segments of the community in the process of making decisions.

This study assesses the impact on parents of community school efforts to encourage school involvement and effect a positive change of attitude toward the role of the school. The study will also investigate those school characteristics which are claimed to be unique to community schools. A determination will be made to see if the operation of the community school does include these functions.

#### Specific Statement of the Problem

In this study, parents in Worcester, Massachusetts, which is a medium size, urban eastern public school system will be surveyed. The major focus will be on the attitude of parents and the differences, if any, between those parents having children who attend community schools versus those parents whose children attend a traditional neighborhood type school. Corollaries to this focus will be the

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 152.

difference between the two types of schools under study and the amount of parent participation in the school program.

The major research questions investigated are:

1. Is there a difference between community school parents attitudes toward school and the attitudes of the non-community school parent?
2. Is there a difference in parental involvement between community school and non-community school?
3. What are the unique characteristics of community school and are they present in the school studied?

Other subsidiary questions that are considered include a comparison of community school and non-community school parents in the following areas:

1. Will the income of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
2. Will the race of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
3. Will the age of the parent or guardian make a difference in the attitude?
4. Will the amount of involvement of the parent or guardian affect the level of positiveness?

#### Significance of the Problem

The major problem presently confronting urban schools is their failure to provide inner-city children with the

basic skills necessary for success in our society. Charles Silberman underscored the failure of urban schools when he described them as being unable to teach the intellectual skills and academic knowledge that students need if they are to be able to earn a decent living and to participate in the social and political life of the community.<sup>23</sup> According to Silberman, a necessary step in remedying this situation is the involvement of urban parents in school decision making. As evidence for this position he noted that parent participation was a key element in most of the successful schools that he observed.

The above point of view is affirmed by the writing of Ornstein. He also maintains that the failure of urban schools is due in part to the lack of meaningful parental involvement in policy making.<sup>24</sup> Additional support for parent participation comes from the writings of Fantini. He states that "the failure or short life of many pedagogical reform movements in public education may be traced to the absence of participation by parents and community."<sup>25</sup> In this same connection, Melby commenting on the notion

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<sup>23</sup>Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 81.

<sup>24</sup>Allan C. Ornstein, "Administrative/Community Organization of Metropolitan Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV (June 1973), p. 698.

<sup>25</sup>Mario Fantini, Marilyn Gittel, Richard Magat, *Community Control and the Urban School* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1970), p. 175.



that parents are key elements in public education reform points out that:

. . . Nationally speaking, we have not yet tried to use all our resources in education. Educators have struggled alone. All we have asked of the people is money. We need them. We need people—all of them. . . . We will have new insights and awareness of new powers, not to control but to liberate.<sup>26</sup>

The community school concept is one approach to parent involvement that could be put to use in urban settings. The very essence of a community school is the belief that the school is most effective when it involves the people it is attempting to serve in designing educational programs and activities. The community school provides an organizational framework that assures individuals and small groups an opportunity to be aware of what is going on around them and to have an impact upon the decisions that are made.

If the schools of our cities are to be rejuvenated an important objective must be an increase in community involvement which can ultimately lead to the development of positive attitudes towards the efforts of schools. The community school approach offers a design and program for school change that appears to be comprehensive, realistic and workable. Furthermore, it avoids the errors of a piecemeal approach by focusing on the total school environment.

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<sup>26</sup>Ernest O. Melby, "Let's Stop Oversimplifying Our Educational Failures," *Community Education Bulletin* (Boca Raton: Southeastern Regional Center for Mott Foundation Projects, 1971), p. 1-2.

Since a medium size, multi-ethnic, urban school system has made a commitment to this type of school and has under its jurisdiction four community schools as well as forty-eight traditional, neighborhood schools, it is appropriate to study the effects this change has brought about as viewed by the parent consumer. An assessment of parents attitudes might produce supporting data that would encourage other urban school districts to look in the direction of community schools for bringing about meaningful change in their schools. It is particularly appropriate that this investigation should occur at this time as on July 1, 1974, the United States Congress completed the final passage steps to approve the first federal legislation to support community schools. This act will encourage a major expansion in the establishment of new community education programs. The congressional appropriation provides the sum of fifteen million dollars for each fiscal year ending prior to July 1, 1978.

### Definition of Terms

#### 1. Community Education

The philosophical notion that the school should serve the entire community by providing for all the educational needs of its members. Special emphasis is placed on having the local school serve as the catalyst for bringing community resources to bear on community problems

in an effort to develop a positive sense of community, improve community living, and develop the community process toward the end of self-actualization.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Community School

As defined in this study, a public education institution which serves the entire community regardless of age, sex, race or creed. This type of school promotes the solution of community and school problems by encouraging residents to participate in a variety of activities and programs. It is the focal point for the Community Education philosophy which is integrated into the delivery system for both cognitive and affective skills presented to pupils normally using the school.

## 3. Non-community School

The non-community school or traditional school, in one variation or another, is the type with which most adults are familiar. The non-community school places its emphasis upon school subjects, with most of the time divided between reading, writing and arithmetic. Teachers are expected, above all, to be experts in their subject-matter fields and in teaching methods. Emphasis is placed upon academic achievement as the child's only avenue to success.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Jack D. Minzey and Clyde LeTarte, *Community Education: From Program to Process* (Midland, Michigan, 1972), p. 19.

<sup>28</sup>Robert J. Havighurst and Bernice L. Nevgarten, *Society and Education* (Boston, 1962), p. 30.

### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited for the following reasons:

1. This study was limited to the extent that a questionnaire was able to ascertain the attitudes of parents toward the type of school their children attended.
2. The administration of the questionnaire did not allow for possible excessive ratings which the responder might make concerning his school.
3. This study was conducted in a medium size, urban, eastern, public school system. The characteristics of the parents in this study may differ significantly from parents in other metropolitan areas.
4. Another limitation was the respondent's understanding of the directions.
5. A further limitation of this study is that the reliability of the instrument is not known.
6. Finally, the results were limited by the awareness of the parents that a written study was being made based upon their replies. An effort was made to assure the respondents that their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous.

### Plan and Content of this Thesis

This chapter has presented both a general and a specific statement of the problem to be investigated. Three major research questions and four subsidiary questions have

been stated. The significance of the study, definition of major terms and the studies major limitations have also been outlined.

Chapter II contains a review of literature related to the investigation of the research question.

The methodological procedures are stated in Chapter III. This chapter also includes a description of the samples used in the study, a description of the instrument, and a description of the methods used to evaluate the research questions.

In Chapter IV the results of the data is presented. Overall comparisons of the community school—non-community school groups are discussed.

Chapter V concludes the study. A summary, conclusions and recommendations for further study are presented.



## CHAPTER I I

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The major challenge currently facing urban school systems is the need to find ways of providing quality education for their diverse student population. This situation has been caused, at least in part, by the unchecked urbanization of American Cities which led to massive bureaucratization and centralized control of urban schools. As a result urban schools are no longer responsive, as they once were, to the needs of the people they served. This, coupled with the failures of the inner-city schools to provide an adequate education for poor and minority students has given rise to community demands for increased participation in school governance. It is the position of some educators that efforts to ameliorate this situation must focus on finding ways of uniting the community and the school. Mario Fantini states:

Participation by the clients of the city public schools — the parents and community residents; in other cases, the students themselves — represents the emergence of two important publics that separately or together wield an enormous amount of energy. This energy can combine with that of the professional to bring about needed fundamental reform of our urban schools . . . basic changes are not likely without the support of parents, community residents and students.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Fantini, op. cit., p. 25.

The following review of literature and research supports the view that (1) citizen participation is a growing phenomenon in the schools; (2) historically, the community school movement has served as a vehicle for citizen participation; and (3) the community school concept is an approach that can be effective in facilitating citizen participation in urban schools.

### Citizen Participation in Education:

#### An Overview

Originally the public schools were extensions of education in the home. In the early days the community took a lively interest in determining programs, hiring teachers and establishing ways and means for supporting the schools. As the schools expanded in numbers and size, boards of education were elected or appointed to coordinate and manage school affairs.<sup>30</sup> The boards in turn hired personnel to assist them with the administration of the schools.

With the increasing professionalization of American Education, the running of the schools passed into the hands of professional administrators. This was especially so in the larger cities where school professionals became responsible both for supervising large and varied bureaucratic organizations and for offering the necessary innovations to

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<sup>30</sup>Betty Deshler and John L. Erlich, "Citizen Involvement: Evaluation in the Revolution," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV (November 1972), p. 173.

keep pace with a rapidly changing society. As pointed out by David Rogers in his *110 Livingston Street* these "Captains" of education became like their corporate counterparts, increasingly unresponsive to the needs and aspirations of the various communities with their systems.<sup>31</sup>

This situation, however, was not to endure without resistance. The onset of civil disorders in urban areas and a growing realization that inner-city minorities were alienated from their schools as well as other major institutions served as an impetus to Congress to pass legislative programs aimed at mitigating poverty and upgrading the standard of living and the educational achievements of the poor.

Perhaps the strongest act passed during this time was the Human Resources Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-452) which legislated the inclusion of citizen participation in a number of federally sponsored programs that concentrated on reducing poverty in this country. The act specifically included the phrase "maximum feasible participation," a phrase which was inserted into the legislation as an afterthought but was later to become the source of a great deal of controversy.<sup>32</sup> "Maximum feasible participation" implied that beneficiaries of the poverty programs (i.e., low-income citizens) should

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<sup>31</sup>David Rogers, *110 Livingston Street* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 392-394.

<sup>32</sup>John H. Strange, "Citizen Participation in Community Action and Model Cities Programs," *Public Administration Review*, XXXII (October 1972), pp. 657-658.



be seated on the policy making boards of the agencies established to implement the programs.

Similarly, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 8-10) required citizen participation as a prerequisite to receiving federal funding. For example, local Head Start Program were required to establish councils composed of the pupils parents.<sup>33</sup> This legislation was later followed by a recommendation from the National Advisory Council on Civil Disorders that cited the need for citizen participation in schools serving the poor, particularly those located in the inner cities.<sup>34</sup> The issue of citizen participation received national recognition through the news media when a crisis arose in the New York City School System. A group of East Harlem parents and community residents, in an effort to protest the insensitivity and unresponsiveness of the school bureaucracy, prevented the opening of a "model" school. The East Harlem protest was an effort to insure quality education and equal opportunity for Black and Puerto Rican children by insisting that the school bureaucracy listen to their concerns and aspirations for the community. Intermediate School 201 thus became a symbol for a different approach to urban school reform—an approach deeply rooted in the American value system: participation.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Evelyn Weber, Early Childhood Education: Prospectives on Change (Worthington, Ohio: Charles Jones Publishing Company, 1970), p. 45.

<sup>34</sup>Report of the National Advisory Commission of Civil Disorders, p. 440.

<sup>35</sup>Fantini, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

While the protests in New York mounted in support of citizen participation in the schools it is significant to note that a number of leading educators were beginning to advocate the establishment of community schools as a partial answer to the problems of low-income people.<sup>36</sup> A leading spokesman for the community school concept was Jack Minzey who maintained that while the community school was not new or novel in concept it did represent an effort to make the school more responsive to individual's needs and desires and to be more relevant and accountable to the communities served.<sup>37</sup>

A number of leading educators and public officials have predicted that the establishment of community schools will continue to increase in the years to come. Past President Lyndon B. Johnson,<sup>38</sup> and former Commissioner of the Office of Education, Sidney P. Marland,<sup>39</sup> are among those who have maintained community schools will grow in number. In addition, numerous states have passed legislation encouraging the development of community schools by offering state funding for these endeavors. Federal support for community schools is also available since Congress passed Public Law 93-380. This act will be providing funds through

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<sup>36</sup>Harry Gottenfeld, "Educational Issues in a Low Income Area as Seen by Community, People and Educators," *Phi Delta Kappan*, III (February 1971), p. 336.

<sup>37</sup>Minzey, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>38</sup>Lyndon B. Johnson, Address presented to American Association of School Administrators, *Nations Schools*, LXXVII (March 1969), p. 29.

<sup>39</sup>Sidney P. Marland, "The Federal Role in Community Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV (November 1972), p. 146.

1978 to encourage the growth of community schools and to disseminate information about their goals, structure and values.

Much of this optimism is based on the feeling that the community school concept holds great promise for urban schools as it involves parents and other laymen in as many facets of school operations as possible. The community school emphasizes that "high morale in an urban school results basically from the combined cooperative activities of all those concerned with children."<sup>40</sup>

Since there is no one philosophy of community education it perhaps would be helpful to set the stage by tracing its development and various forms.

#### The Community School Movement

Naslund attributes the beginning of the community school to the establishment of schools on a private estate in Switzerland in the 1800's. In these schools, the community was used as the prime source of curriculum material with the emphasis placed on meeting the vocational needs of the students.<sup>41</sup>

The colonial period in this country was also marked by school programs that could be labeled community education.

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<sup>40</sup>Byrd Jones, Ed., *Urban Education: The Hope Factor* (Philadelphia 1972), p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>R. A. Naslund, *The Origin and Development of the Community School Concept*, unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, 1951, p. 109.

These schools were primarily agricultural in origin and rural in location. One such example, the Bethesda School in Georgia, was established in 1740 so that orphan boys could be given a practical, agricultural education.

Among the alternative school organizational models developed in the 1800's was a plan offered by New York's Secretary of State, John C. Spencer. He proposed to adapt New York City schools to an organization form current in rural areas known as the community school.<sup>43</sup> He argued that the problems of the city arose from the failure to allow the control of education to remain with the people themselves.

During this period of controversy over which type of school would serve as the basic model, schools also were expanding their services to adults. The first recorded use of school facilities for adult evening education was in Providence, Rhode Island in 1810.<sup>44</sup> Another early example of involving adults was the Chicago Board of Education which in 1865 used public funds for this purpose.<sup>45</sup>

It was during the turn of the century that elements of community education first began appearing in public education. One example was the use of the school as civic center undertaken in Rochester, New York in 1907 under the

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<sup>43</sup>Katz, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>44</sup>Decker, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.



sponsorship of Edward J. Ward. Other early programs were undertaken by the boards of education in both Newark, New Jersey and New York City as they developed recreational programs through the use of the schools and their playgrounds.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was marked by a number of pioneering efforts that recognized the important relationship of the community to schools. John Dewey's laboratory school was perhaps the most distinguished attempt to prepare students for adult life through viewing the school as a miniature community.<sup>46</sup> In addition, a program was started in Gary, Indiana that required the schools to become actively involved with the community. The so-called Gary Plan required the schools to be open all day and all year with parents and adults involved in school activities.<sup>47</sup>

However, it is important to note that during this period the schools generally continued to treat the community as the recipients of their programs. This was due largely to the view held by professional educators that they were in the best position to determine the needs of the community. While educators were prepared to acknowledge the community it was assumed that involvement was to be limited and then mainly only for good public relations.

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<sup>46</sup>Dewey, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Decker, op. cit., p. 51.

In light of the current problems of New York City schools, it may seem strange to find the historical precedent for the community school in East Harlem, New York. Here, with the leadership of its principal, Leonard Covello, the Benjamin Franklin High School sponsored a community-school program. For the first time, the community was not just told what and how they were to do something. On the contrary, the community through the Benjamin Franklin High School Advisory Council united with the school to confront the many problems that existed in East Harlem. This school, opened in 1934, developed ideas, took action, and carried out programs that were the result of community needs as perceived by Covello, members of the faculty, students of the school and local citizens. Leonard Covello believed that the school should be a social change agent serving to unite the community and school in a combined effort to confront the many problems that existed in East Harlem. He felt that the failure of schools to involve themselves intimately with the community had been a grave error in public school education.<sup>48</sup>

Despite its success, the Benjamin Franklin High School attempt at community involvement was an isolated episode. Other New York City Schools continued to function

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<sup>48</sup>R. W. Peebles, "The Community School: Then and Now," *Phylon* (Summer 1970), p. 158.

in the traditional manner. That is, they continued to tell their communities what they needed.

Another innovative effort similar to that of Covello's was the All-Day Neighborhood School concept also developed in New York City in an attempt to meet the needs of "difficult" or so called "tension areas" in districts where children came primarily from poverty homes.<sup>49</sup> The program involved teachers who worked from mid-morning until three o'clock and then served as leaders of various kinds of club activities until five o'clock. The goal was to break down the wall that separates the school and the community, but the effect was to have teachers and social workers doing those things they thought were proper for their communities.

Although New York State pioneered the community school movement, it was Flint, Michigan that brought this movement national recognition. The Flint program originated in 1935 when efforts were begun to extend the benefits of the school to the whole community with the communities assistance. Assisted by the Mott Foundation, all of Flint schools became community schools with Advisory Councils comprised of interested citizens. The community schools that are part of the Mott program are more interested in community involvement than in control, which is left to the established board of education.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Curriculum Bulletin 1947-1948 Series, No. 2, *Extended School Services Through the All-Day Neighborhood Schools*, Board of Education of the City of New York.

<sup>50</sup>Sol Gordon and Doris Kassin, "The Morgan School, Washington, D.C.," *Center for Urban Education*, New York (April 1971), p. 10.

The Mott Institute for Community Improvement attempts to develop the community school philosophy. These efforts include: financial aid to new community schools; consultation service to communities that wish to begin community schools; establishment of regional centers to foster the development of community schools; publication of newsletters; yearly workshops; and, grants for graduate study.

Community schools based on the Flint model are being established throughout the United States in an attempt to make education more relevant and accountable. Programs have spread to such large cities as Miami, Florida, New Haven, Connecticut, Toledo, Ohio and Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1964, only ten schools outside Flint, Michigan were involved in any depth with the concept. By 1972-1973, the community model had been adopted by 2,771 schools in 460 districts across the nation.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the success of the Mott model during this period, a different emphasis, in some quarters, began to be placed upon the generic term community school. In New York City, urban parents had begun waging a battle for control over the educational process. Their distrust of the system was so deep that they wanted neither involvement nor participation, but a role which guaranteed community control of the schools. A closer look at this development with its

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<sup>51</sup>Evan Jenkins, "Community Life: Schools Become the Hosts for Public Services," *New York Times*, 23 December 1973, Sec. 1, p. 18.



relationship to school failures and urban problems will underscore the need for change and the role community can play. It may be useful, however, to first consider the three different community school approaches. Specific community schools differ widely in how they define their purposes and functions. However, a review of the literature indicates that there are three basic designs that somewhat overlap. They can be categorized as the Traditional Form, Community School model, patterned after Flint, Michigan and the Community Control concept.

First, the traditional form can be ascribed to schools that viewed community involvement as synonymous with a program of good school-community relations. Elsbree and McNally noted that the use of community resources in these schools were for the purposes of "selling the schools to the public to gain financial support" or "as a program of informing the public about school affairs and policies."<sup>52</sup>

The traditional community school tends to limit citizen involvement to recreational programs or special programs for adults and children at the close of the normal school day. Typically, these programs were tacked on to the existing curriculum.<sup>53</sup>

This approach did result in an extended use of building policy, adult education courses and extended

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<sup>52</sup>W. S. Elsbree and H. J. McNally, *Elementary School Administration and Supervision* (New York, 1951), p. 374.

<sup>53</sup>Minzey, op. cit., p. 151.

activities for students. On the other hand the terms of community involvement was determined by school personnel and there was no overt, planned effort to make the community a true part of the school. Reeder writes that this model enables the school board to maintain control by prescribing all the conditions under which the community would be allowed to use school property.<sup>54</sup>

A second model, the community school concept is built upon the notion that the school is an integral part of the community. The community school attempts to recognize the needs of the community and to act as the facilitator to see that these needs are met. The origin of this model is usually credited to Frank J. Manley. Manley, a physical education teacher, in 1935 convinced Charles Stewart Mott, founder of the Mott Foundation, that school buildings open in the evening and year round would combat the problems of juvenile delinquency just as well as the construction of boys' clubs. This was the beginning of Flint's famous lighted-school house activities which later developed into a full-fledged concept of the community school under the leadership of Mott and Manley.<sup>55</sup>

Under the leadership of Frank Manley and members of his staff the Flint approach differed sharply from that

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<sup>54</sup>W. G. Reeder, *The Fundamentals of Public School Administration* (New York, 1951), p. 285.

<sup>55</sup>C. M. Campbell, "Contributions of the Mott Foundation to the Community Education Movement," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV Number Three (November 1972), p. 195.

used in earlier community school movements. Previously the usual pattern was for the school professional to draw up a list of community needs from his perspective and then set forth a program of action to meet these needs. By way of contrast, Manley and Mott along with the community identified large social issues and then established processes to try to solve them.

Campbell credits Frank Manley with recognizing the need to have a full-time staff person responsible for the administration of the community school program. Manley created the position of community school director or coordinator because he felt that programs should have continuity. In the past, programs had tended to start out grandiosely and then gradually fade into oblivion. The failure of programs to be maintained was usually caused by staff members trying to administer community programs in addition to their other duties and they often lacked the energy to do both tasks well.<sup>56</sup>

Campbell also noted that Manley spearheaded the effort to bring community school councils to each neighborhood. He states that while the community school council was not unique to Flint, Manley had firmly attached the council to the administrative structure of the school.<sup>57</sup> Each school had a citizen-based advisory council which

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<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 196.

attempts to determine the needs and wants of the neighborhood so that it can be reflected in the school program. The school board, with the assistance of the Mott Foundation, supports citizen involvement by funding programs, hiring personnel such as community school directors, and listening to the recommendations of the school advisory councils.

Model three, the community control approach, is built upon the notion that people tend to have little or no control over the educational personnel and processes that mold the lives of their children. The major feature of this model is that parents, students or residents collaborate to define a community and exert extensive decision-making power over the policies of the school or schools serving that community.<sup>58</sup>

Proponents of this model argue that major areas in which decision-making powers are to be exerted include hiring and firing of staff, planning or approval of program and curriculum, granting of contracts for construction, maintenance and repairs, determination of size and allocation of a budget. The principle of community control does, however, recognize that some or most of these powers may be delegated to the professional staff.

Parsons, in discussing this model, commented that there is no place in the United States that a community has

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<sup>58</sup>Tim Parsons, "The Community School Movement," *Community Issues* (December 1970), p. 3.



gained total control. He argues that attempts by communities to develop a community control approach to the running of the schools by utilizing public funds must confront the state laws which set minimum standards and restrict or prescribe certain actions. Independent efforts at establishing community controlled schools may be limited by shortage of funds, local fire and building codes and state laws setting minimum certification or other standards for non-public schools. Projects which try to establish a community controlled school or district are best described as "efforts" toward community control.<sup>59</sup>

Each of these models, to some extent, conforms to the following definition of the community school as articulated by the National Community School Education Association:

It is based on the premise that the schools belong to the people, and that local resources can be harnessed to attack community problems. With the public schools as community centers, the total needs of communities can be served.<sup>60</sup>

A major contrast between the three models is the traditional school position that the community has no need to be intimately involved with the school. The traditional school emphasized subject matter and views its job as the training of children's minds through teaching intellectual and vocational skills. Advocates of the traditional school

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup>*Membership Directory*, National Community School Education Association July 1, 1972-June 30, 1973, p. 17.

model view the community as something that you did things to or for but you did not allow it to participate in the process. The traditional viewpoint helped create the alienation that communities began to feel existed between themselves and the schools. The development of this attitude and the failure by urban schools to provide quality education for poor and minority children served as the stimulus to the growth and development of community schools.

#### Urban Problems and the Community School

The failure of the schools to provide quality education for urban children is well documented in the study *Equality of Educational Opportunity* conducted for the U.S. Office of Education by James S. Coleman. This study points out that achievement test results show students from minority groups score substantially below white students.<sup>61</sup>

In an effort to overcome this failure urban school systems throughout the United States began to offer "compensatory programs" ostensibly to compensate for what was perceived to be learning inadequacies of the children of the poor; but in reality they were compensating for the failure of their own regular programs to recognize, to nurture, and to develop the real talents of urban children.

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<sup>61</sup>James S. Coleman, et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C., 1966), p. 274.



Various state acts, foundation awards and almost a billion dollars a year from Congress beginning in 1965 have funded a variety of special programs. Reports by the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children in 1966 and 1968 and the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1968 provides incontrovertible evidence of the failure of public education for ghetto children is growing worse.

The failure of urban schools to reach a major segment of the population might have continued had it not been for the civil rights movement of the 1960's which brought national attention to the injustice being inflicted. Bloomberg and Kincaid in reporting urban school failures states:

The old civil rights movement was a significant factor in forcing the public and professional educators to focus increased attention on problems in the backward, degenerate ghetto schools, once again demonstrating that urban school systems have little tendency to change in the absence of outside pressures.<sup>62</sup>

The civil rights movement helped to create the demand that communities must control their schools in order to hold the professional staff accountable for pupil achievement. This development received national recognition in 1966 when a controversy arose in New York City over the opening and operation of a new intermediate school, IS 201. Dissatisfaction by parents over the inability of the school system

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<sup>62</sup>Warner Bloomberg and John Kincaid, "Parent Participation," *The Urban Review*, III (June 1968), p. 11.

to integrate the school with white children and the failure to provide quality education for the ghetto schools led to a proposal by Preston Wilcox that IS 201 became an experimental school with the responsibility for educational and administrative policy in the hands of the local community.<sup>63</sup>

The ensuing controversy over control led to a massive New York teacher strike in 1968, which, when ended, made it clear to the nation that meaningful school participation on the part of parents, students and teachers was inevitable.<sup>64</sup> Community involvement was now seen as a positive approach and one that assists the school in accomplishing its objectives.<sup>65</sup> Clarence Olsen stresses the need for involvement as he feels that without it "educational systems cannot change enough to meet the individual and collective educational demands of our rapidly advancing technological society."<sup>66</sup>

Fantini, Gittell and Magat maintain that almost everyone now appears to endorse some measure of community involvement in local school districts.<sup>67</sup> As a result, educators

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<sup>63</sup>Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 296.

<sup>64</sup>Mario D. Fantini, "Community Participation in the Seventies," *Citizen Action in Education*, II (Winter 1975), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup>Barry E. Herman, "Community Involvement a Positive Approach in Education," *Integrated Education*, VI (March-April 1971), p. 28.

<sup>66</sup>Clarence Olsen, "Community Education A Response to Demands for Community Involvement," *Community Education Journal*, II (May 1972), p. 60.

<sup>67</sup>Fantini, Gittell and Magat, op. cit., p. 98.

are beginning to feel that community participation in decision making might help make schools into more effective, humane educational institutions.<sup>68</sup>

The possibilities of bringing about change in the learning environment of the school by community participation in its operation may be viewed with skepticism except that there are examples in various parts of our country that are apparently successful. These specific examples are serving as models to the hundreds of tax supported systems which are endeavoring to alter the structure of their schools.

The successful prototypes may be grouped into three categories:

1. Quasi-independent community schools or programs within public school systems.
2. Independent community schools.
3. Minority controlled existing state school districts.

An example of the first category is the quasi-independent Springfield Avenue Community School in Newark, New Jersey.<sup>69</sup> The program in this school has demonstrated how community people can develop a coalition of public agencies to create an exciting day care and primary school. Located in the heart of Newark's black ghetto, the Newark

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<sup>68</sup>Daniel U. Levine, "Integration in Metropolitan Schools: Issues and Prospects," *Phi Delta Kappan*, LIV (June 1973), p. 652.

<sup>69</sup>L. Rich, "Newark's Parent Powered School; Springfield Avenue Community School," *American Education*, Vol. 7 (December 1971), p. 35.

Day Care Council has gained commitment of funds from the Labor Department, New Jersey State Department of Educational Research and New Jersey State Department of Community Services to supplement the Newark Board of Education monies.

The parents in the Springfield Avenue School helped to interview and select teachers for each classroom. They are involved in the planning of curriculum and meet frequently with teachers to discuss classroom progress and set future directions. The curriculum stresses the development of concepts through utilization of the child's own life-style experience. The school is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every week of the year with hot meals, a medical program and day care available.

Prototypes falling into the second category of independent community schools have the advantage of establishing schools totally independent of public authorities. However, this advantage is somewhat offset by the frustrations of securing adequate and flexible funding. Without exception the major problem facing independent parent community schools is funding.

One of the longest established successful schools in this category is the East Harlem Block Schools in New York.<sup>70</sup> Parents are clearly the crucial element in the East Harlem Block Schools. The parents founded the school,

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<sup>70</sup>Parson, op. cit., p. 52.



hired the staff and are always present in the schools as volunteers, visitors, staff, etc. Located in the predominately Puerto Rican area, the school enrolls primarily Puerto Ricans, Blacks and Italians. Neighborhood children are admitted on a first come first serve basis. Tuition is a token two dollars a week with the majority of the expenses being met by a variety of small foundation grants and contributions from individuals. The classroom philosophy is based upon an open class approach with teachers providing children a choice among a variety of activities. Heavy emphasis is placed upon field trips with the highlight of the year being a week spent on a farm.

The third category of prototypes, minority controlled school districts, are found in a few states where the local school district is run by a low-income minority group population. The Edgewood District in San Antonio, Texas is such an example.<sup>71</sup>

The efforts to broaden community involvement within the Edgewood District has been led by board members who have urged the adoption of a curriculum to promote "brown awareness." Since the district does not have the funds to implement most desired improvements, parents have entered a suit against the state for failing to provide equal education for their children.

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<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

The prospects for continued growth of community participation appear to be most likely in the first category of successful prototypes, programs within public school systems. The problems of financing and state regulations governing the operation of schools makes the operation of other types of community schools difficult and uncertain.

If the community school concept is to become the force to bring about urban school change, the community and the school system will have to enter into a partnership to bring about the desired improvements. An examination of how one medium-sized urban school system was influenced to implement a policy of resident involvement in their schools can serve as a model blueprint for other urban areas.

The development of community schools in the city of Worcester resulted from the mutual efforts of civic organizations, the school committee, school administrators, and laymen in their quest to improve the physical plant of public schools and the quality of public education. Several public elementary schools in Worcester that had been built in the nineteenth century were no longer considered adequate in 1965. Parent groups became increasingly upset that their children were attending unsafe schools despite a 1949 study which recommended replacement.

In an effort to overcome the failure of the school committee to replace their schools, parent groups enlisted the assistance of city-wide organizations. Community



Services of Worcester, Friends of the Worcester Public Schools and the League of Women Voters all sponsored open public meetings and trips to visit community schools in near-by states. The local newspaper was also enlisted to support the community school concept and, when a new superintendent of schools was to be employed, brought pressure on the school committee to hire a supporter of community schools. The newspaper articles noted that the new superintendent would be the key element in getting community schools underway.<sup>72</sup> On April 6, 1967, the Worcester School Committee voted to go on record in favor of the Community School concept where feasible and appropriate."<sup>73</sup>

On May 2, 1968, the school committee approved the specifications for the position of community elementary school principal. The major responsibilities assigned to this position are "planning, directing, and assisting in evaluating the instructional program, the community school activities, and the building operation."<sup>74</sup> In addition to the usual education and professional qualifications for the position of principal, Worcester requires that its community school principals have had educational preparation

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<sup>72</sup>Dick Wright, "School Requires New View," *Worcester Gazette*, December 12, 1966.

<sup>73</sup>*Records of the School Committee Proceedings, 1965-66-67*, p. 488.

<sup>74</sup>*Records of the School Committee Proceedings, 1968-69-70*, p. 506.

in sociology and be willing to request a sabbatical leave for one-half year to attend a college where training in community education is available.<sup>75</sup> The applicants for community school principal are interviewed by a panel of administrators, principals, and community members. This panel selects the names of three candidates, which it turns over to the superintendent, who then selects the principal.

Later in May, 1968, the school committee approved specifications for the position of community school director. The primary function of this position is to plan, develop and coordinate the community school program under the principal's supervision. The community school director is required to be certified as an elementary school teacher, have a master's degree, and have taught full-time for five years. The community school director must be willing to attend a training program in community education also. The director is selected by the same process used for selecting the community school principal. At the same meeting the school committee voted to establish a community school on an experimental basis for one year's duration.<sup>76</sup> The Woodland Street School was selected as the site of the experiment.

Principals and community school directors for the two proposed community schools were appointed a year in advance of the opening of the respective schools. This

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<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 507.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

enabled them to attend training programs in the field of community education and also to learn about the communities in which their schools were situated.

During that year, they made an intensive effort to get to know community residents and to explain the concept of community education. They conducted "coffee klatch" meetings at their office and in the home of community residents. With the help of sociology students from Becker Junior College, they conducted a survey among area residents to find out what concerns residents had and who would be interested in participating at the school. They then formed a community advisory community to discuss the school's role in the community. Both schools formed community advisory councils prior to the opening of schools.

Worcester now has four community schools, all at the elementary level. These schools are all located from the lower socio-economic statuses. The school administration has expressed a general philosophy of education concerning community schools.<sup>77</sup>

Included in this philosophy is the idea that schools must change as their communities change. In order to achieve these goals, Worcester's community schools are open extended hours to people of all ages. The community schools attempt to develop leadership in the community in an effort to solve community problems.

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<sup>77</sup>*In Worcester Community Schools Mean People, Worcester Public Schools, Worcester, Massachusetts.*

The movement for community schools in Worcester was similar to the movement for community schools in the United States. It had a combination of government officials, volunteer organizations and community residents pressuring the school administration to adopt community schools. The stages of development with community concern and support from high status volunteer organizations, combined with forceful statements by government officials leading to a commitment from school administrators is a pattern that other urban centers can look to in attempting to gain support for their own programs.

#### Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter has been divided into three sections. These sections represent the background of this study. A review of the literature and the acts passed by Congress show that citizen participation in the public schools is not only growing but is mandated by law. Research by Katz, Rogers and Fantini revealed that the growth of school bureaucracy had created a gulf between the schools and the people they served. The writings of Silberman and Minzey demonstrates the causes and reasons for wide spread alienation in the urban centers toward institutions and schools in particular.

The tracing of the community school movement in section two revealed that it is not a recent phenomenon but has recently received wide-spread attention as a means of combating the problems of our schools in a total manner rather than by the piecemeal approach of compensatory education. The history of the community education movement revealed that there were three overlapping basic forms.

The final section of research reviewed urban school problems and the several categories that the sponsorship of community school programs fall into. Rich and Parsons described several existing successful programs. The explicit purpose of these programs was to involve community residents in their schools.



## C H A P T E R   I I I

### METHODOLOGY

#### Background

The three major purposes of this study as described in Chapter I were: (1) to investigate whether community school parents held attitudes toward school that were different from non-community school parents, (2) to determine whether school involvement of community school parents was different from non-community school parents, and (3) to determine the unique characteristics of the community school and to determine if they are present in the community schools studied. In addition, subsidiary purposes included a comparison of the differences in attitude of community school and non-community school parents by reason of income, age, race and level of involvement.

This study had its inception when the investigator was employed as a public elementary school principal in Worcester, Massachusetts. In April of 1970, the investigator accepted a new position and began the development of an educational plan for a new community school located in the inner-city. He was to be responsible for its implementation and accountable for its success or failure. The charge given to the investigator, by the

Superintendent of Schools, was to develop a community school responsive to the needs of the neighborhood it was to serve.

After a planning stage of eighteen months, during which community surveys were done and an advisory council developed, plus two years of operation, it was consistently observed that poor parents in an urban area still had difficulty relating to school bureaucracy even when its stated purpose was the involvement of the community. The formalization of the ideas for this study began to take shape in the winter of 1974 as the investigator recognized that informal observation of the effects that a community school may have on parents was not enough data to justify the continuation or termination of the community school concept.

Support for a more objective study on the influence of the community school on parental attitudes came from the Superintendent of Schools and the Center of Urban Education in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Technical assistance, advice and direction were provided by faculty members of the University.

### Sample

The sample for this investigation was drawn from the parent population of four community schools and four non-community schools. The schools were selected on the basis of data which indicated that the general populations were the same. All eight schools chosen are target area schools in Worcester. This means that a minimum of thirty

percent of the families in each school are eligible for welfare assistance and other aid from city and federal authorities. Other factors which were used in the selection of schools were school district proximity and minority representation. Each community school district was contiguous to a non-community school district and minority representation was approximately the same in both groups. The population of these groups, from which the sample was drawn, can therefore be characterized as belonging to an urban inner-city setting. The parents selected to respond to the questionnaire live in multi-racial neighborhoods that are primarily white.

Parents were selected to receive the questionnaire on a random basis by using the pupil index file at each school. This file contains the population of the school and among other data the name and address of the parent as well as the pupil's date of entrance into that particular school. Eliminated from the population were parents whose children had attended that particular school for less than a year. Eliminated also were duplicate cards which pertained to children having the same parents. The cards were shuffled thoroughly, assigned a number and through use of a table of random numbers thirty parents were selected from each of the eight schools.

The population from which the sample was drawn totaled 1,500 parents. There were 240 parents in the sample, 120 in the community school group, and 120 in the non-community

school group. Demographic data was collected during the administration of the instrument and is presented for the parents participating in this study in Table 1.

### Description of the Research Instruments

The parent questionnaire concerned the development of items which would determine the attitude of parents toward education, their child's school, personnel and curriculum. In order to accomplish this, a number of items were developed for each category. The items were then reviewed by people in leadership positions in community education from the Community Education Development Center at Worcester State College and several faculty members at the University of Massachusetts. In addition, the instrument was pilot tested among selected parents for vocabulary difficulty and ambiguity. Suggestions for changes from these sources served to improve the wording of the questionnaire and the final number and form of the items. The instrument is presented in Appendix A.

The final form of the questionnaire had two sections. The first was designed to provide the essential background information on age, income, education, race plus type and amount of school involvement. The second section was arranged in order that a Likert type scale response could be used. The scale consisted of five possible responses: (a) strongly disagree, (b) disagree, (c) undecided, (d) agree, and (e) strongly agree.

TABLE 1

Composition of Community School and Non-Community  
School Groups Reported in Percentages

Categories	Community School Group	Non-Community School Group
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	19	9.4
Female	81	89.6
<u>Age</u>		
Under 34 years of age	46.6	39.5
Over 34 years of age	53.4	60.6
<u>Income</u>		
\$7,500.00 or less	41.4	58.6
More than \$7,500.00	62.3	36.7
<u>Race</u>		
White	79.3	78.3
Black	17.3	18.9
Spanish	3.4	2.8
<u>Educational Level—Father</u>		
Less than high school	34.5	50.9
Attended high school	51.7	45.3
Attended college	13.8	3.8
<u>Educational Level—Mother</u>		
Less than high school	23.3	25.5
Attended high school	62.9	67.9
Attended college	13.8	6.6



The questions in Section Two were grouped into clusters. Each cluster was developed around an attitude area. Questions one through eight were specifically pointed toward determining the educational philosophy of the parent. Questions nine through thirteen were designed to determine the general attitude toward the school. Questions fourteen through nineteen were concerned with attitude toward school personnel. Questions twenty through twenty-five dealt with attitude toward the quality of the school curriculum. The average time taken to complete both sections of the questionnaire was twenty minutes.

The second data gathering instrument was concerned with determining the unique characteristics of the community schools which distinguish them from the non-community schools. A check list was developed based upon characteristics found most frequently in the literature.

The characteristics were determined by a search to acquire numerous groups of characteristics from various services. The lists were similar in content. In all, seven lists were examined and compared. Effort was taken to use only lists which came from research studies or sources which were well-known in the field of community education. There are other lists, but none with strikingly different concepts. The summary list of characteristics upon which the check list was based is as follows:

1. The use of school facilities and personnel is greatly expanded into the late afternoon and

- evening hours, as well as summers.
2. The school facilities are adapted to multiple use and to persons of all ages.
  3. The curriculum, and many of the activities are developed with community involvement and use of community resources.
  4. The daytime, after school and summer programs for children, youth and adults are considered with due (equal) importance.
  5. Democratic thinking and action are promoted in all phases of the school's work by including the people concerned.
  6. School leadership is expanded and shared with the community.
  7. A sense of unity and solidarity are developed in the neighborhood by the school as it serves as the focal point for community activity.
  8. Living, learning and service activities are coordinated by the school with various other agencies in the community.
  9. Citizen participation and communication do much to establish confidence in the minds of the people that they can solve cooperatively most of their own community problems.

These nine characteristics, drawn from a total of seventy-nine individual criteria, serve as the basis for the data gathering check list prepared for the staff interviews.

The lists used in determining the community school characteristics for this study are included in Appendix B.

### Collection of the Data

The collection of parent data began with the drawing up of a master list of the randomly selected sample. Pupils whose parents had been selected to respond to the questionnaire were assembled in a central area and given instructions to take the questionnaire home. Accompanying the instrument, which had been placed in an envelope, was a supporting letter from the school principal. A sample of this letter may be found in Appendix A.

In addition, pupils were informed that if they promptly returned the questionnaires to school that a prize, which consisted of candy, would be given to them. Two hundred forty questionnaires were sent home. The return rate was 92.5 percent of the sample and therefore a follow-up of the non-respondents was not considered essential.

The checklist used to distinguish the community schools from the non-community schools was administered by interview with the principal; assistant principal; community school director, if one; and two teachers, one primary, one intermediate, at all schools. The interviews were conducted in private during school hours with the understanding that the results were to be kept anonymous and confidential. The explicit purpose of these interviews was to determine the functions of the school and how they related to the known community characteristics. A copy of this check list is found in Appendix C.

### Data Analysis

The use of the Likert rating scale permits an assessment of parental attitudes by indicating clearly a position for or against a particular issue. The scales were numbered one through five with five representing the extreme positive end and one the extreme negative end. Significant differences in the responses of the two groups were tested by use of a chi-square test. The level of significance for this portion of the study was established at the .05 level. The major research questions concerned with parental attitude toward education, school, school personnel and curriculum are tested in this fashion as are the subsidiary questions based on age, race, income and level of involvement.

The results of the interview check list to determine the characteristics of community and non-community schools as compared with accepted community school characteristics is reported in tabular and summary form.

### Summary

In this chapter the major research questions were stated along with the subsidiary questions. The methods and procedures used in undertaking the investigation of the research questions were discussed. The population included 1,500 parents whose children attended community and non-community schools. The sample consisted of 240 parents of which 120 were in the community school group and 120 were

in the non-community school group. The sample was randomly selected.

The research instruments used in data collection were described as well as the method used to obtain the random sample. Also, the technique used to obtain the responses of the sample population to the questionnaire and the answers of the professional staff to the check list interviews were discussed. In the last section the treatment of the data was explained. The major statistical technique employed in analyzing data was the chi-square test.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if there was a difference in the attitude of parents whose children attended community schools versus those parents whose children attended a non-community school. In addition, the study was intended to investigate the difference between the two types of schools and the amount of parent participation. The three major research questions were:

1. Is there a difference between community school parents attitudes toward school and the attitudes of the non-community school parents?
2. Is there a difference in parental involvement between community school and non-community schools?
3. What are the unique characteristics of community schools and are they present in the schools studied?

Other subsidiary questions that were considered include a comparison of community school and non-community school parents in the following areas:

1. Will the income of the parent or guardian make a difference in their attitudes?
2. Will the race of the parent or guardian make a difference in their attitudes?

3. Will the age of the parent or guardian make a difference in their attitudes?
4. Will the amount of involvement of the parent or guardian affect the level of positiveness?

The data presented in this chapter was collected by administering a questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of community and non-community school parents. There were 120 parents in each group with 116 community school parents responding and 106 non-community school respondents. The sample was selected on the basis of data which indicated that the general populations were the same for both groups.

The information used to distinguish community schools from non-community schools was collected by establishing a check list based upon established community school characteristics and interviewing a representative sample of the professional staff in community and non-community schools.

The statistical procedure used to analyze the questionnaire responses was a chi-square test. The level of significance for all research questions was the .05 level of statistical significance. The results of the interview check list are reported in tabular and summary form.

A summary of the percentage of community school and non-community school parent responses to each of the questions in the parent questionnaire is reported in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, for parent attitudes toward education, toward school, toward personnel and toward curriculum, respectively.



TABLE 2 (continued)

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS												
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		AGE		INCOME		RACE								
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High	Low	High	B	W							
4. Children should be allowed more freedom to select what they want to study than they usually get in the school room.	Total	19	13	24	16	21	10	22	19	19	15	14	16	17	13	10	17	14	18
	S.D.																		
	D	36	35	37	42	33	45	34	43	30	29	22	34	27	33	30	29	33	23
	U	16	15	16	13	18	15	16	11	19	17	14	19	18	15	15	17	16	18
	A	23	32	16	21	24	15	24	21	26	29	31	28	33	23	35	29	28	31
	SA	6	5	7	8	4	15	4	4	6	10	19	3	5	16	10	8	9	10
5. Schools of today are neglecting the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic).	Total	15	9	20	12	16	10	16	15	14	11	12	11	8	18	10	12	17	3
	S.D.																		
	D	17	9	24	19	16	15	19	21	14	16	19	14	20	10	30	13	19	10
	U	12	17	8	21	6	15	11	21	5	11	7	13	12	8	5	10	9	13
	A	38	39	37	31	42	35	37	38	38	45	41	48	42	49	30	49	42	51
	SA	18	26	11	17	20	25	17	17	5	17	21	14	18	15	25	16	13	23
6. Parents should leave the most important educational decisions to the teachers and educational administrators. (For example, decisions that have to do with teaching methods and what should be studied in classes.)	Total	23	17	28	23	22	40	19	21	24	22	26	19	17	31	10	24	18	28
	S.D.																		
	D	36	44	29	29	40	25	37	39	33	60	55	64	65	51	65	62	62	57
	U	10	9	11	15	8	15	10	15	6	7	7	8	9	5	10	6	9	5
	A	24	24	24	27	22	15	27	21	27	8	10	6	6	10	5	7	7	10
	SA	7	6	8	6	8	5	7	4	10	3	2	3	3	3	10	1	5	0

TABLE 2 (continued)

QUESTIONS	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS									
	Total	AGE		INCOME		RACE	INVOLV.	Total	AGE		INCOME		RACE	INVOLV.		
		<34	>34	Low	High				Low	High	B	W			Low	High
7. Children need more supervision and discipline than they usually get in the school room.	27	24	29	23	30	25	28	28	31	25	21	39	20	30	27	28
	41	37	45	48	36	50	39	44	55	37	52	31	55	42	46	41
	11	13	10	12	10	15	9	13	10	16	15	10	10	12	15	10
	16	20	11	13	18	5	19	10	2	16	8	15	5	12	7	16
	5	6	5	4	6	5	5	5	2	6	4	5	10	4	5	5
8. Parents have sufficient amount of influence about what goes on at the school.	3	2	3	2	3	5	2	4	10	0	3	5	10	2	3	5
	26	28	24	25	27	35	24	26	24	28	26	28	15	29	30	21
	20	20	20	19	21	25	19	19	14	22	19	18	20	18	20	18
	41	43	40	37	43	25	45	43	38	45	44	39	45	44	37	41
	10	7	13	17	6	10	10	8	14	5	8	10	10	7	10	5



TABLE 3

Percentage of Community and Non-Community School Parent Responses to the Evaluative Questions on Attitude Toward School

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS										NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS									
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		INVOLV.		Total		AGE		INCOME		RACE		INVOLV.		Total	
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High		High	>34	<34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High		High
9. I frequently visit school. (For example, to see my child's teacher or to visit a classroom.	No Reply	2	4	4	4	5	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	0	2	0	1	2	0	0
	S.D.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	21	28	24	28	20	28	31	15	15
	D	16	15	18	12	15	15	28	6	6	18	19	17	20	15	15	18	21	13	13
	U	14	11	16	19	11	15	21	8	8	50	48	52	47	54	50	51	42	64	64
	A	49	50	48	52	46	45	50	43	54	6	10	3	7	3	15	2	4	8	8
SA	19	20	18	13	24	20	20	6	30											
10. The school keeps me well informed of my child's progress.	No Reply	1	2	2	2	5	3	2	2	2	4	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	2	2
	S.D.	3	4	3	6	2	5	4	3	3	9	12	8	12	5	5	11	10	8	8
	D	13	11	15	9	16	10	14	11	15	5	5	5	3	8	5	4	6	3	3
	U	4	0	8	4	4	5	5	2	6	63	62	64	62	64	60	65	66	59	59
	A	53	50	55	54	51	50	52	64	43	19	16	20	18	20	25	17	13	28	28
SA	26	33	19	25	27	25	27	17	33											
11. The school advisory council serves an important role in the school.	S.D.	3	5	2	4	3	10	2	4	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	3	
	D	3	4	2	0	4	0	3	0	5	2	0	3	1	3	0	2	3	0	0
	U	33	30	35	33	33	40	31	38	29	37	38	36	32	43	30	37	39	33	33
	A	48	56	42	44	51	45	50	49	48	51	48	53	58	41	60	50	52	49	49
	SA	13	5	19	19	9	5	14	11	14	9	14	6	8	13	10	10	6	15	15

TABLE 3 (continued)

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS												
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		AGE		INCOME		RACE								
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High	<34	>34	Low	High							
12. I feel uncomfortable going to visit my child's school.	S.D.	2	4	0	2	1	0	2	0	3	4	5	3	3	5	0	5	5	7
	D	6	9	3	8	5	10	5	8	5	14	21	9	17	10	15	15	17	10
	U	5	2	8	6	3	5	5	11	0	7	2	10	9	3	10	6	10	0
	A	46	41	50	44	48	50	44	51	41	51	48	53	50	54	35	55	58	39
	SA	41	44	39	40	43	35	44	30	51	24	24	25	21	28	40	19	10	48
13. I have a sufficient amount of influence about what goes on at school.	S.D.	6	7	5	6	6	5	6	2	10	4	5	3	1	8	0	5	5	3
	D	24	18	29	21	27	40	21	25	24	28	26	30	29	28	10	33	31	23
	U	32	32	32	38	28	30	33	43	22	23	21	23	23	20	40	18	28	13
	A	34	39	29	33	33	20	36	30	36	41	43	41	41	44	45	40	33	56
	SA	4	4	5	2	6	5	4	0	8	4	4	5	3	6	5	4	3	5

TABLE 4

## Percentage of Community and Non-Community School Parent Responses to the Evaluative Questions on Attitude Toward Personnel

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS							
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		AGE		INCOME		RACE			
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W		
14. My child's teachers at the school are friendly and easy to talk to.	S.D.	1	3	0	2	1	5	1	0	3	0	1	2	0
	D	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	0	2	0	5	0
	U	5	2	8	4	6	5	5	11	0	9	5	9	12
	A	46	43	48	46	45	55	45	55	38	60	44	50	55
	SA	47	52	42	48	46	35	48	34	57	29	48	40	35
15. The Principal at the school is friendly and easy to talk to.	S.D.	2	2	2	2	2	5	1	1	1	0	3	0	3
	D	3	4	3	4	3	0	4	2	5	0	0	0	0
	U	10	11	10	11	10	5	11	17	5	6	10	0	10
	A	42	37	45	31	48	50	40	49	35	56	41	70	47
	SA	43	46	40	52	37	40	44	30	54	36	44	30	40
16. My child's teachers at the school are doing a good job.	S.D.	2	4	0	4	0	5	1	0	3	0	2	0	1
	D	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
	U	11	7	14	8	13	20	10	17	6	8	5	12	13
	A	49	50	48	44	52	35	53	47	51	62	49	80	53
	SA	37	39	36	44	33	40	35	34	40	41	15	33	22
17. My child's principal at the school is doing a good job.	S.D.	1	2	2	2	1	5	1	2	1	3	0	2	3
	D	5	7	3	2	8	0	7	0	10	3	0	2	1
	U	15	13	16	8	19	20	14	23	8	15	20	11	15
	A	46	45	47	42	48	35	48	49	43	58	46	70	51
	SA	33	33	32	46	24	40	30	26	38	29	33	10	34

TABLE 4 (continued)

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS													
	Total	AGE		INCOME		RACE	INVOLV.	Total	AGE		INCOME		RACE	INVOLV.						
		<34	>34	Low	High				<34	>34	Low	High			B	W	Low	High		
18. The School is doing a good job in helping my child to develop a positive attitude about learning.	S.D.	3	2	3	2	3	5	2	4	1	4	0	6	1	8	5	4	3	5	
	D	9	9	10	4	13	5	11	4	14	8	0	0	8	0	0	6	6	3	3
	U	13	11	14	9	17	15	13	17	10	10	10	5	9	10	5	9	13	0	0
	A	43	39	47	52	36	35	45	47	40	46	62	80	52	46	80	52	58	54	54
	SA	32	39	26	33	31	40	29	28	35	36	21	10	29	36	10	29	20	38	38
19. The school my child attends has an excellent way of handling parent complaints.	S.D.	3	4	2	2	3	5	2	2	3	8	5	5	8	5	5	7	6	8	8
	D	9	7	11	8	11	20	8	11	8	8	2	5	8	2	5	6	8	2	2
	U	32	31	32	27	36	25	33	42	24	27	44	40	31	44	40	31	37	26	26
	A	39	32	45	40	37	35	39	36	41	39	39	40	39	39	36	40	39	39	38
	SA	17	26	10	23	13	15	18	9	24	16	18	13	10	13	10	17	10	26	26

TABLE 5

Percentage of Community and Non-Community School Parent Responses to the Evaluative Questions on Attitude Toward Curriculum

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS											
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		AGE		INCOME		RACE		INVOLV.					
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High		
20. The school is able to help my child to learn to read well.	S.D.	3	3	2	2	3	0	3	2	0	3	0	5	0	2	1	2	
	D	4	4	4	4	5	4	2	7	4	0	6	5	3	0	5	6	0
	U	13	11	15	11	15	10	14	15	11	10	10	9	10	10	11	12	8
	A	53	54	53	56	51	50	55	55	52	50	50	54	43	65	46	54	44
	SA	27	28	26	27	27	35	24	26	27	34	40	32	39	25	36	27	46
21. The school is able to help my child work well with numbers.	S.D.	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	2	5	1	3	0
	D	8	6	10	4	10	5	9	7	8	5	0	6	3	0	6	6	3
	U	13	7	18	15	12	25	11	9	16	9	7	6	13	10	9	9	8
	A	51	50	53	52	51	45	52	57	47	55	60	61	49	65	53	60	48
	SA	27	37	18	29	25	25	27	25	29	29	31	27	33	20	31	22	41
22. The school is able to help my child express himself well in writing and speaking.	S.D.	3	2	3	2	3	0	3	2	3	4	2	5	5	4	3	5	
	D	8	7	8	2	12	5	9	2	13	6	2	8	3	5	6	7	3
	U	17	9	24	15	19	40	13	19	16	7	5	6	10	5	8	9	5
	A	52	54	52	58	48	35	55	55	51	63	74	64	64	65	61	69	54
	SA	20	28	13	23	18	20	20	22	17	20	17	22	18	20	21	12	33



TABLE 5 (continued)

QUESTION	COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS						NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS															
	AGE		INCOME		RACE		AGE		INCOME		RACE											
	<34	>34	Low	High	B	W	Low	High	Low	High	B	W										
23. The school gives an opportunity to my child to take part in sports and games.	S.D.	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	3	0	5	0	8	0	4	3	2	
	D	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	3	0	3	3	4	1	3	2	5	2	2	4	0
	U	11	9	13	8	13	15	10	11	11	11	10	6	7	5	8	3	10	5	8	3	3
	A	54	56	53	48	58	50	57	57	52	52	50	60	64	58	56	67	65	59	67	49	49
	SA	32	33	31	42	25	35	30	32	32	32	35	28	24	31	33	20	20	30	18	46	46
24. I am very pleased with my child's school program.	S.D.	3	4	3	4	3	5	3	2	4	5	2	2	0	3	1	2	0	2	1	3	3
	D	10	7	11	4	13	10	10	8	11	10	6	6	5	6	8	3	0	7	6	5	5
	U	14	11	16	13	15	10	14	9	18	14	11	11	17	8	11	13	15	11	15	5	5
	A	47	45	50	46	48	55	47	53	43	43	55	56	57	55	53	59	75	51	63	44	44
	SA	26	33	20	33	21	20	26	28	24	24	20	25	21	28	27	23	10	29	15	43	43
25. There are too many fads and frills in my child's school.	S.D.	7	6	8	4	9	0	9	4	9	0	2	2	0	3	1	3	0	2	2	3	3
	D	7	9	5	7	8	10	5	11	3	10	7	7	5	10	8	7	25	4	10	2	2
	U	26	20	30	31	22	30	24	32	21	21	30	23	26	20	26	18	40	19	25	18	18
	A	35	37	34	33	36	25	39	34	37	37	25	43	43	44	42	44	30	46	48	36	36
	SA	25	28	23	25	25	35	23	19	30	30	35	25	26	23	23	28	5	29	15	41	41

In addition, in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 results are reported for parents over 34 and under 34 years of age, for low and high income parents, for black and white parents, and for parents with low and high involvement in the school. The results of the chi-square significance test for the difference between community school and non-community school parents for each of the attitudinal questions is provided in Table 6.

The discussion of the attitude results is divided into four areas since the parent questionnaire was designed to investigate the attitude toward education, the child's school, school personnel and curriculum. The questions on the questionnaire were clustered to obtain this information with the first eight questions dealing with attitude toward education, questions nine through thirteen relating to attitude toward their child's school, questions fourteen through nineteen on attitude toward personnel and the final six questions on attitude toward the curriculum.

#### Attitude Toward Education

The results of the cluster of questions on attitude toward education revealed little difference in the positiveness of attitude. An interesting finding, however, is the response to question number three which refers to encouraging parents to take an active role in school affairs. Table 2 reveals that 83% of community school parents responded in the positive while 64% of non-community parents did. Table

TABLE 6

Chi Square Statistics, Degrees of Freedom and Level of Significance of Responses to the Questionnaire

Question	Chi Square Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level
1	6.79	4	.147
2	12.35	4	.015
3	18.25	4	.001
4	2.97	4	.564
5	1.42	4	.840
6	18.52	4	.001
7	1.45	4	.836
8	.50	4	.974
9	13.51	5	.019
10	3.84	5	.523
11	2.60	4	.626
12	9.77	4	.044
13	3.63	4	.459
14	3.18	4	.528
15	5.80	4	.214
16	1.80	4	.772
17	2.75	4	.601
18	5.61	4	.230
19	3.11	4	.539
20	1.56	4	.817
21	2.54	4	.638
22	5.82	4	.213
23	4.08	4	.396
24	2.56	4	.634
25	4.28	4	.370

6 presents a chi-square value of 18.52 which shows that this difference was statistically significant at the .001 level. Community school parents do seem to believe that an active role in the school such as volunteering and serving on committees with teachers should be encouraged.

Table 2 also reveals that 86% of community school parents believe that the school should be available after the normal school day for both children and adults whereas 74% of non-community school parents agreed. As shown in Table 6, the difference was significant at the .015 level. The availability of programs in community schools outside the normal day could account for the significant result whereas the non-community school parents were not exposed to extensive school use beyond the needs of their children.

A third notable finding in Table 2 appeared in question six where a larger percentage of community school parents indicated a willingness to leave important education decisions to teachers and administrators than did non-community school parents. Thirty-one percent of community school parents would leave decision making to the professionals while only 11% of non-community school parents would be willing. The difference as shown in Table 6 is significant at the .001 level. This table also reveals that 82% of non-community school parents are strongly opposed to leaving important decisions to the teaching staff as against 59% of community school parents. These findings may be the result of a trust factor which has developed

between the community schools and parents. Parents in community schools could feel that the welcoming atmosphere and encouragement to participate already provides sufficient involvement in decision making.

#### Attitude Toward Child's School

The cluster of questions on attitude toward school indicates that both groups of parents do feel positive toward the schools their children attend. A significant result did occur in question nine which dealt with the frequency of visits to school. The findings presented in Table 3 show that 68% of community school parents felt that they frequently visit the school while only 56% of non-community school parents felt the same way. Chi-square data presented in Table 6 indicates the difference was significant at .019 level.

Community and non-community school parents differed significantly in their responses to question twelve. This question indicated that community school parents were more uncomfortable than non-community school parents when visiting school. The large percentages for both groups, 87% for community school parents and 75% for non-community school parents, may indicate that a significant number of respondents had misread the statement. Table 3 reveals that responses to question twelve do not coincide with the attitude toward visiting school as found in question nine or question thirteen which concerns parental influence on



school affairs. The data does produce the impression that parents will have to be encouraged to participate in school affairs. In addition, this encouragement may have to take place over a long period of time before parents can feel at ease in relating to their school.

#### Attitude Toward School Personnel

The overall responses in this cluster reveals no significant difference in attitudes toward school personnel. An interesting observation, however, is that teachers in community schools and non-community schools were considered to be both friendly and competent at their jobs. It appeared though that principals were not rated as highly. Perhaps as representatives of the bureaucracy, they were not perceived in as positive a light as staff members dealing directly with children. It should be added though, that 79% of community school parents and 84% of non-community school parents believe that the principal of their child's school is doing a good job.

#### Attitude Toward Curriculum

The overall results of this cluster of questions revealed no significant differences in attitude toward the curriculum of the school. Table 5 indicates that both groups appeared satisfied that their schools were both doing an adequate job. Based upon this information for both the community school and non-community school groups, it might be possible to conclude that the Worcester Public Schools

are doing an unusually good job in meeting the needs of children, as seen by their parents.

Finally, with respect to the first major research questions the data indicated that both groups were positive in their attitude with a slightly more positive attitude on the part of community school parents. The findings, however, were not significant at the .05 level. It is not possible to state that community school parents develop a more positive attitude toward schools than non-community schools parents.

While both the community school and non-community school parents rated their own attitude toward school as positive, a very interesting result occurred when in the background portion of the questionnaire parents were asked to rate their child's attitude toward school. The community school parent saw their child's attitude towards school as being more positive than the non-community parent. This difference was statistically significant at a .05 level. This result is reported in Table 7.

The finding is important to note because it shows that community schools may be having an effect on attitudes that are not yet transferable to parents. The data in Table 7 coupled with the possible variables that could not be controlled may indicate that difference in attitudes are developing and four years of operation was not an adequate period of time for community schools to produce a significant difference in parental attitudes.

TABLE 7

Percentage of Parent Responses in Rating  
Child's Attitude Toward School

Group	No Response	Very Positive	Positive	Somewhat Positive	Not Positive At All	Chi- Square Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level
Community School	0	50	44	16	1	10.21	4	.037
Non-community School	3	35	40	17	5			

Data pertaining to the subsidiary research questions are reported in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5.

#### Influence of Income on Attitude

For the purposes of this study, parents with annual earnings of seven thousand five hundred dollars or less were assigned to the high group. The overall results follow the same general pattern of the study as a whole. In general, both the low and high income parents of community schools showed a tendency, though not statistically significant, to have attitudes toward school that were more positive than non-community school parents.

It was interesting to note that in Table 2, question five, referring to the possible neglect of fundamentals in the schools, high income parents of both the community and non-community groups were in agreement that this was happening. Sixty-two per cent of community school parents and 64% of non-community school parents agreed with that position. With respect to low-income groups, 60% of the low-income parents of the non-community schools agreed while 48% of the low-income community school parents were in agreement. This difference seems to indicate that low-income parents of community schools feel that their schools are more effective. The emphasis on community involvement by the community schools may be making low-income parents more positive toward the efforts of the schools.

Table 2 also indicates that the results of question six were interesting as non-community school parents of both high and low income appeared not to favor leaving educational decisions to the teachers and administrators. Conversely, community school parents of both high and low income were more likely to feel comfortable having teachers and administrators making decisions. Eighty-two percent of both low and high income non-community school parents did not feel comfortable leaving decision making to the professional staff. On the other hand, the percentages for low and high income community school parents were 52% and 62% respectively. Perhaps this result was due to the greater opportunity that community school parents have to become involved in decision making. This opportunity to become involved may lead to the development of a higher trust factor between the parents and the professional staff.

Another noteworthy finding occurred in question number twenty-four found in Table 5. The table shows that 79% of low-income community school parents indicated they were pleased with their child's program while 69% of high income community school parents held this attitude. This finding seems to suggest that high income community school parents may have a tendency to become more critical of their child's program as accessibility to the school increases.



### Influence of Race on Attitude

The results indicated that race was not a factor in parental attitudes. Response to question three did reveal that a higher percentage of community school Black parents disagreed with the notion that parents should be encouraged to take an active role in school affairs. Table 2 shows the percentages to be 25% for Black parents and 7% for white parents in community schools. This finding indicates that perhaps Blacks have less time available to serve in volunteer capacities at the school. A number of factors which may influence this result are employment, size of family, availability of baby sitters or education.

### Influence of Age on Attitude

Parents were assigned to one of two age groups: over 34 years of age and under 34 years of age. Generally, the age of the parent did not influence their attitudes about school. There were, however, two slight exceptions.

First, there was agreement between community school and non-community school parents under 34 years of age that children should be allowed more freedom to select what they wish to study in school.

Second, the under 34 group for both community school and non-community schools tended to be more progressive in their attitude toward education while the over 34 community school group appeared to be more liberal than the non-community parent in this age bracket.

### Influence of Involvement on Attitude

The two groups of parents, community and non-community, were divided into low and high involvement sections. Four visitations to the school or less was considered low involvement while five visitations or more was high involvement. The dividing line was set at four as report cards are sent home four times a year and it was a reasonable expectation that normal visits might occur at those times.

The data presented in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 suggests that community school parents, in general, tended to have attitudes toward involvement that were more positive than non-community school parents. High involvement parents from both groups tended to have attitudes towards schools that were more positive than low involvement parents. This was particularly true with respect to questions on parent attitude toward personnel. In every question in this cluster, fourteen through nineteen, the percentage of response in the strongly agree portion of the scale was higher for the high involvement parents of both groups. Question fifteen is typical of this cluster. Data from Table 4 shows that 54% of high involvement community school parents feel the Principal is friendly and easy to talk to versus 30% of low involvement community school parents. This is slightly higher in the non-community school parent assessment as 59% of high involvement parents feel the principal is friendly and easy to talk to. Conversely,

27% of the low involvement non-community school parents viewed principals as friendly and easy to talk to.

Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 also present data that suggests that there is little difference in the overall attitude of community school and non-community school high involvement parents. High involvement parents of both groups seem to be just as progressive in their attitude toward education, alike in their attitude toward their child's school and similar in their attitude toward school personnel. Attitude toward curriculum was slightly less positive. Sixty-seven percent of high involvement community school parents felt, in question twenty-five, that their child's school had too many fads and frills. Seventy-seven percent of high involvement non-community school parents also felt this way. On the other hand 53% of low involvement community school parents and 63% of low involvement non-community school parents felt that there were too many fads and frills in the school. This may indicate that as community schools or non-community schools continue to invite involvement they are also encouraging criticism of the school. The involvement, therefore, cannot be superficial or insincere if the school is to benefit in a meaningful fashion.

#### Community and Non-community School Involvement

The second major research question concerned the differences in frequency and type of parental involvement

in the two group schools. This data was collected in the background section of the parent questionnaire. Parents were asked to respond to a variety of possible reasons for visiting their child's school by writing in the number of visits they had made opposite the reason for the visit. For the purpose of this study, four visitations to the school or less was considered low or typical involvement. Parents are usually expected to visit school at the close of marking periods or whenever the marking period does not include a report card home and every school observes National Education Week by holding at least one major open house program. Therefore, five visitations or more was considered high involvement.

The investigation indicated that neither group was highly involved with their school. An examination of Table 8, which contains the results of this section reveals that in none of the ten listed areas did involvement exceed fourteen percent of the parents. Community school parents, in general, did visit their school more frequently than non-community school parents. The difference, however, was not only small but also neither group was significantly involved in the running of the school.

Table 8 does reveal a significant difference in response for community parents on three out of the ten reasons for visiting the school. First, community school parents indicated a greater willingness to have a teacher conference than non-community parents. Analysis of the



TABLE 8

## Percentage of Parent Responses to the Possible Reasons for School Involvement

Area	Group	Number of Visitations										Chi-Square Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
1. Teacher Conference	Community	17	27	25	10	11	2	1	1	3	3	18.11	9	.034
	Non-community	32	32	22	7	6	0	1	0	0	0			
2. Meeting with Principal	Community	62	22	6	0	3	1	2	0	3	1	10.15	8	.254
	Non-community	66	21	10	1	0	0	1	0	0	1			
3. Conference with other School Staff	Community	71	15	4	3	2	0	0	0	3	2	7.19	6	.304
	Non-community	82	11	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	1			
4. Attend a P.T.A. Meeting	Community	84	6	2	2	1	0	1	0	2	2	9.30	8	.318
	Non-community	77	7	1	2	6	0	1	1	5	0			
5. Attend an Advisory Council Meeting	Community	76	5	2	3	2	0	3	1	6	2	9.05	8	.338
	Non-community	85	4	4	1	1	0	2	1	2	0			
6. Attend Special School Assemblies	Community	45	24	13	2	6	3	2	0	3	1	17.31	8	.027
	Non-community	69	11	11	3	4	0	0	0	1	1			
7. Attend Open House	Community	68	27	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	4.04	5	.544
	Non-community	72	25	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0			
8. Volunteer to Work	Community	86	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	6.01	4	.198
	Non-community	95	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2			
9. Chaperone a Class Trip	Community	82	9	4	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	7.06	7	.422
	Non-community	89	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1			
10. Drop in to Say "Hello"	Community	53	16	11	3	3	1	4	0	3	6	27.68	8	.001
	Non-community	84	4	4	3	0	1	1	0	1	2			



data yielded a chi-square value of 18.11 which was significant at the .034 level. Second, community school parents signified a greater willingness to attend special school assemblies. The result was statistically significant at the .027 level. Third, community school parents expressed a greater willingness to merely visit for the purpose of saying "hello." This finding was statistically significant at the .001 level.

The second major research question studied the difference in parental involvement between community school parents and non-community school parents. No significant difference was found. Neither group was extensively involved in their schools although community school parents were more prone to conference with a teacher, attend a school assembly or drop in to say "hello." The data does not indicate that community schools are more successful overall in encouraging involvement or that community school parents are more involved in the running of their school than are non-community school parents.

#### Community and Non-community School Characteristics

The third major research question concerned the unique characteristics of the community school. The data was collected by interviewing staff members of community and non-community schools. The interviews were based upon a check list of expected community school characteristics.

The check list is found in Appendix C. The interview results are found in Table 9 which indicates the Worcester community schools were distinguished from the non-community schools. The distinguishing traits were: a community-wide advisory council, use of school facilities after the regular academic day, use of school facilities during the day by the community, use of the school facilities in the summer, a pre-school program, use of community resources, use of community volunteers, the self-concept of pupils considered as well as skill development, active encouragement in the community to participate in the school and special staffing patterns.

Half of the distinguishing traits also appeared in the non-community schools. Investigation revealed that in these cases there was a decided difference in the manner in which the trait occurred.

Both groups claimed to have a community-wide advisory council in their schools. The interview disclosed that the community school councils had wide-based representation from the neighborhood including businessmen, clergy and teenagers. The majority of community schools had neighborhood elections to arrive at membership. The non-community schools representation on the councils were mainly administrative staff and teachers of the school with a small number of parents. The parents in all of the non-community schools studied were invited by the school principal to participate.

TABLE 9

Summary of Professional Responses to the Interview  
on Community School Characteristics

Question	Group	Response			
		Yes	No	Don't	Know
1. Does your school have some form of lay Community Advisory Council?	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	16	0	0	
2. If your school has a lay Community Advisory Council does it include groups in the Community other than parents and administrators at the school?	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	2	14	0	
3. The school facilities are used after the regular academic day.	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	16	0	0	
4. The school facilities are used during the evening hours for Community purposes.	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	16	0	0	
5. The school facilities are used during the summer.	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	4	12	0	
6. The school activities include a program for three to five year olds.	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	0	16	0	
7. Sections of the building can be occupied concurrently by more than one age group (ex., children, senior citizens).	Community School	20	0	0	
	Non-community School	0	16	0	
8. Parents and/or other residents have a voice in total school curriculum planning.	Community School	18	0	2	
	Non-community School	0	16	0	

TABLE 9 (continued)

Question	Group	Yes	No	Don't Know
9. Teachers, parents and administrators work together on neighborhood needs.	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	0	16	0
10. Community resources are regularly used in the development of curriculum materials.	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	1	15	0
11. The school serves as a referral agency when residents need social services outside of the school's competency.	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	8	8	0
12. Programs are offered which are aimed at economic upward mobility of the neighborhood residents.	Community School	16	3	1
	Non-community School	0	16	0
13. Is there a procedure for resident input to the types of programs offered?	Community School	15	2	3
	Non-community School	6	10	3
14. Does the school staff make an effort to determine what the people want and need in the way of programs?	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	1	15	0
15. Does there seem to be less damage to the building due to vandalism since the Community programs began?	Community School	19	0	1
	Non-community School	Not Appropriate		
16. Are the children that you know doing better in their school work since the Community program began?	Community School	15	3	2
	Non-community School	Not Appropriate		

TABLE 9 (continued)

Question	Group	Yes	No	Don't Know
17. Has the school initiated any programs to improve conditions in the neighborhood, other than school related programs?	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	0	16	0
18. Do parents volunteer aid in classroom experience?	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	2	14	0
19. Does the council have an opportunity to evaluate programs?	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	3	11	2
20. Is the student's self-concept considered in curriculum planning?	Community School	20	0	0
	Non-community School	16	0	0



Although both types of schools may claim to have advisory councils the intent and purpose of each group is different. The community schools attempt to get wide-based representation while a captive group under the domination of the principal tends to represent the non-community schools.

Each group claimed to use the school facilities after the close of the regular academic day. The community school, however, developed its after school programs in terms of the needs of the pupils and directly supervised the activities providing staff and financial support. The non-community schools served as housing agents for any group that wished to use the school such as Brownies or Boy Scouts. The school staff was not involved in arranging the program nor was the school concerned about the purposes of the activity as long as vandalism to school property did not occur.

There was use of school facilities in the summer for both groups. The community school developed its own summer program designed to the needs of the pupils attending their school. Staff hired to run these programs, in the main, came from the same school. The programs were designed to carry over the support the regular school program from September to June. The non-community schools were used as a convenient housing resource for city-wide programs. The staff had no relationship to the regular

school and the programs had no correlation to the needs of the school in the fall.

Volunteers were used at community and non-community schools. The community schools encouraged and actively recruited volunteers from the neighborhood they served. Non-community schools used whatever volunteers were sent to them by the central office bureau for volunteer service. The non-community school volunteers frequently came to serve their own purposes. For example college students volunteered many hours due to course requirements. The community schools reported that their volunteers were committed to working with the school as they were recruited with no purpose in mind. There was no requirement to serve. In addition, very frequently the volunteer had a child attending the school which appeared to maintain the motivation to volunteer over a longer period of time.

The development of a positive self-concept in pupils was part of the school program in both groups. The community schools had regular scheduled activities which promoted responsibility, self control and a positive self image. Bulletin boards as well as frequent programs with both parents and children were used to help build self esteem. The non-community schools did not offer school-wide support to this view but let it remain an individual matter with the teacher in the classroom.

### Summary

The major research question examined the difference between the attitude of parents whose children attend community schools and the parents whose children attend non-community schools. The responses to the evaluative portion of the questionnaire indicated that there was a tendency among community school parents to be more positive in their attitude toward education, their child's school, school personnel and school curriculum. The analysis of the four subsidiary questions based upon age, income, race and level of involvement also displayed the trend in favor of the community school parents, but again, the differences were small.

The second research question studied the difference in type and amount of parental involvement in the schools. The investigation revealed that neither the community school parent or non-community school parent was extensively involved in the schools although, in general, community school parents did participate more frequently. There was significant difference in three of the ten areas of possible involvement. Community school parents had more frequent teacher conferences, attended more special school assemblies and were more prone to just drop into school to say "hello."

The third research question studied community school characteristics and examined the differences between community and non-community schools. An examination of the literature revealed that there were nationally accepted

## C H A P T E R V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this study was to assess the differences, if any, in the attitudes of community school and non-community school parents. A second major goal was to determine whether school involvement of community school parents was different from non-community school parents. In addition, the study also sought to determine if community schools actually had traits that could distinguish them from non-community schools.

A review of literature relevant to community schools supported the notion that the demand for parent participation in the running of public schools is no longer just a growing phenomenon but is frequently being mandated by law. Legislation on both the national and state level has required citizen participation as a prerequisite to receiving federal funding. There was general agreement that parental participation in the schools could overcome community apathy towards education. Moreover, it was maintained that involvement of parents is a necessary first step in making the educational bureaucracy become more responsive to the needs of the community being served. The writings of a number of authors support the belief that schools can be used effectively to involve parents in an attempt to combat the problems of urban schools.

community school characteristics. Based upon the most frequently mentioned characteristics, an interview check list procedure was used to determine if the focus was different. The data indicated that there were distinguishing traits between the community schools and non-community schools, despite some surface similarities. Community schools in Worcester are operated and do function differently from non-community schools.



In order to determine whether community schools have had a positive effect on parental attitudes the following research questions were investigated.

1. Is there a difference between community school parents attitudes toward school and the attitudes of the non-community school parent?
2. Is there a difference in parental involvement between community school parents and non-community school parents?
3. What are the unique characteristics of the community schools and are they present in the schools studied?

Subsidiary questions were investigated that included a comparison of community and non-community school parents by reason of income, race, age and level of involvement.

The data for this study was collected from a random sample of 240 parents. There were 120 parents in the community school group and 120 parents in the non-community school group. Data was also collected by interviewing professional staff members by means of a check list to determine the differences between the two types of schools.

The instrument employed to assess parental attitudes was a Likert rating scale which was used by parents to indicate their positions on various school related issues. For purposes of this study, the scales of the test were numbered one through five with five representing the extreme positive position and one the extreme negative

position. Significant differences in the responses of the groups were tested by a chi-square statistic. The level of statistical significance was set at the .05 level.

### Discussion of Findings

With respect to the first research question, it was found that the data, in general, provided some support for the contention that community schools create a positive parent attitude toward school. However, the differences between community and non-community school parents on this question were not statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding was perhaps due to the consolidating of small school districts into large school districts that occurred in the city of Worcester during the Spring of 1975. The issue created an emotional response in the affected neighborhoods and was a prominent item in the news media. It is possible that non-community school parents, whose school districts are smaller, were apprehensive about indicating displeasure with their child's school fearing that such an indication would add momentum to the school consolidation movement.

A second possible explanation is that the investigation was carried on by a known administrator in the school system. This fact coupled with the discussion of school closings might have prevented non-community school parents from believing that the goal of the questionnaire was to give parents an opportunity to indicate their feelings about

school so that useful information would be provided for improving education in Worcester and did not reflect on individual schools. Parents might have felt defensive and were unable to respond objectively to the questionnaire.

A third possibility is that the strength of the neighborhood school mystique was overlooked. Parents may have a very strong attachment to the school closest to the home. In addition, it is possible that they might have attended the school as a child. Loyalty to their neighborhood school could have prevented parents from rendering an objective response.

Fourth, there is the possibility that the community schools in Worcester are not doing as good a job as they can. The lack of interaction between parents and the schools may be attributed to attitudes that have been formed over many years, as a result of negative experiences. These attitudes cannot be changed quickly.

Fifth, and a real problem, is the use of the questionnaires to assess parental attitudes. There is no practical way to correct for the possibility of misinterpretation of a question. Dependence has been placed on the ability and willingness of the respondent to provide information although no observation was made of reluctance or evasiveness.

While the data did not reveal a difference that was statistically significant at the .05 level in the clusters of questions dealing with attitude toward education, school, personnel and curriculum, there were a number of questions where the differences in responses between community and

non-community school parents were statistically significant at the .05 level. First, community school parents did seem to believe that parents should be encouraged to take an active role in school affairs. Apparently, the attitudes of community school parents are being affected by the constant overtures of the community school to become involved. While community school parents may not choose to participate, they apparently want to have the option available to them. Second, community school parents indicated a desire to have their schools available for use by both children and adults over a wider time span. This finding is important as evidently the afternoon and evening programs at the community school are meeting a community need. The current emphasis on economy in the schools is apparently not reflected in the attitudes of community school parents as they seem to view school costs as reasonable in relation to the services received.

Third, community school parents indicated a greater willingness than non-community school parents to leave decision making to the professional. Perhaps the efforts of the community school professional staff to involve parents in the operation of the school has begun to build a climate of trust within the community. It would appear that community schools may be slowly removing the feeling of alienation and distrust that neighborhoods have had toward the non-community schools. Fourth, analysis of the question that addressed school visits revealed a significant



difference as community school parents felt they visited schools more frequently than non-community school parents. This finding may indicate that the community school is making a successful effort to involve parents in the operation and programs of the school.

Finally, it was found that community school parents rated their child's attitude toward school as being more positive than the rating non-community school parents gave to their children. It would appear that the children attending community schools are finding it to be a more meaningful experience than are those children attending non-community schools. This finding is important because it suggests that the community school may not, as yet, have had time to influence the attitudes of parents. However, the finding does indicate that the community schools in Worcester are having a positive effect on the attitude of children toward school.

With respect to the second research question, the findings revealed that neither group of parents was extensively involved in the running of the schools. The community school parent did indicate slightly more visitations. Examination revealed that only in three out of the ten types of visitations was the difference significant at the .05 level. Community school parents did have a greater number of teacher conferences, higher attendance at special school assemblies and more general visits to the school than non-community school parents.



The third research question found that community schools did have characteristics which distinguished them from non-community schools. It appeared from the analysis that non-community schools were moving in the direction of community schools and had taken on several of the community school traits in a superficial manner.

No significant difference was found in the subsidiary questions which attempted to determine if income, race, age or level of involvement would make a difference in parental attitudes. Apparently, the attitudes of community and non-community school parents toward school are unaffected by income, race, age or the amount of involvement.

#### Implications of the Study

This investigation has some important implications for the community school movement. In their efforts to promote the community school concept, educational leaders seem to be over enthusiastic in describing its merit. The writings of Minzey, Fantini and Campbell, while subjectively compelling and seemingly logical in content, may have to be approached with a more clinical eye. Supporters of the community school concept will have to undertake additional research to support their contention that parents will be more supportive of their schools if this philosophy is implemented.

This study, while indicating modest differences between the attitudes of community and non-community school parents, did not substantiate the expectation that community schools, in Worcester anyway, will act as a catalyst in overcoming dissatisfaction with the public schools. The additional activities presently being carried on in community schools are apparently having little effect on producing a positive difference in attitude on the part of parents.

Another important finding of this study, that has implications for community school adherents, is the lack of intensive parent involvement in the community school. The involvement of community school parents did not differ significantly from that of non-community school parents. It would seem that the community schools have neglected to develop a program which would ensure parental involvement in their schools. Without such a program it would be difficult to foster more positive parental attitudes. The direct experience of the researcher in the community schools indicates that there is no formal program for the implementation of parent involvement except for membership recruitment on the advisory councils.

Among the most notable shortcomings in the area of involvement was the lack of extensive teacher involvement. Many teachers did not have a clear understanding of the community school concept. It is recommended that teachers

in community schools be required to participate in either an extensive seminar experience or college course work in the area of community education. Any new teacher should have this preparation before starting to teach in community schools.

Another involvement area which needs to be examined is the role of the school in the total community. The school should try to affect a larger segment of the total environment in which it is located. The role of the community-based advisory council should be clearly defined and a process developed which would assure a continuous flow of new parents to participate on the council. It would appear that many of the activities now being presented in the community schools would be just as effective in changing parental attitudes without an advisory council sponsoring the activity and placing a stress on school involvement.

The investigation did show that the community schools were making efforts to distinguish themselves from the non-community schools. The community schools, in theory, are different in at least ten important areas of school organization. These areas, while unique, did not have the positive effect upon parental attitudes that was expected. However, the attitude of community school pupils toward school, as assessed by parents, was significantly different from that of non-community school pupils. This finding is notable because it suggests

that, while it is crucial to change parental attitudes towards school, perhaps the more important positive long-range effects are taking place with the pupils that are attending community schools.

This study has assessed the effect community schools have on the attitudes of urban parents. It is hoped that the findings will provide school administrators, teachers and those responsible for establishing community school programs in inner-city areas with some meaningful insights into the problems and operation of community schools.

#### Recommendations for Further Studies

Research is an area which has to be utilized more by people who support the philosophy of the community school. Some problem areas have surfaced as a result of this study and the researcher hopes that others will investigate them for the benefit of all public schools.

1. This study should be replicated on a sample of community and non-community school pupils.
2. A longitudinal study should be conducted to determine the long-range effects of the community school on parental attitudes.
3. This study should be replicated on a sample of community and non-community school teachers.
4. Research should be conducted for the purpose of establishing program criteria for the training of prospective community school directors.

5. This study should be repeated comparing the attitudes of suburban non-community school parents with urban community school parents.
6. A systematic process model should be developed in an identified successful community school which would include detailed analysis of every activity undertaken in that school. This would bring to the forefront the essential ingredients necessary to prevent community alienation and improve attitudes. The completed model could then be used as an objective research study on which to build programming in emerging community schools and as a model for implementation and evaluation in existing schools.
7. A program should be developed that would encourage and train parents for participation in the community school. A study would be made of the effects of this training on the school and its value in overcoming community apathy and alienation toward schools.
8. This study should be repeated in a larger urban area where the community school approach has been in operation for a longer period of time.

#### Reflections

The role of the researcher was a new one for me although I had been an educator nearly 25 years. The



experience of carrying out this study has tempered my belief that an encompassing concept such as the community school can bring about immediate changes in urban schools. The failure of inner-city schools to provide quality education will not be corrected just because the schools may now say they wish to respond to the needs of the community.

The findings of this study indicate that the role of the community school in bringing about change in the inner city has just begun. The broad theories have been enunciated and it is now time to implement the theories in carefully planned stages. Parental involvement will not occur just because the school opens its doors and says you're welcome. The involvement, even if it were to develop, would not be meaningful unless something is done to help parents understand the role which they can assume in the school. This aspect of community schools appears to be a neglected area but it is one that should have the highest priority.

It seems to me, however, that the community school concept has begun to bring about changes in the neighborhoods that have community schools and the professionals that work in these schools. The schools are open late in the afternoon and evening for children and adults. While the emphasis may be on programs, the community is gathering together at one location and the school is losing its traditional bureaucratic aura. Staff members and community

residents are meeting one another in different situations which may lead to more understanding of each other and sharing of mutual concerns. The pupils attending community schools apparently sense that something is important about school.

On the basis of this experience I would intensify efforts to involve parents in the schools. Hopefully, this involvement would be meaningful for both the parent and the school. The real promise of community schools lies in its desire to develop a system for involvement of people in the identification and solution of their problems. Whether such an effort will make real changes is difficult to determine at this point, but certainly an approach which allows for the coordination of resources through people offers promise. Further, even if the final result is less than desired, a technique for returning the schools to those who use them may be merit enough to warrant fostering the community school.

APPENDIX A

Letter to Parents

Parent Questionnaire

## W O O D L A N D   S T R E E T   C O M M U N I T Y   S C H O O L

A L E X A N D E R   J .   R A D Z I K ,   P R I N C I P A L

93 WOODLAND STREET  
WORCESTER, MA. 01610  
791-8757 791-8758

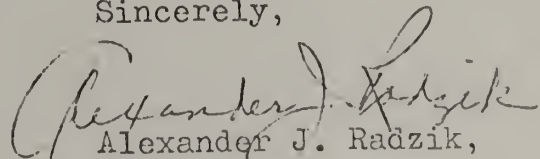
April 28, 1975

Dear Parents,

A friend and colleague is completing his studies at the Center for Urban Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is interested in finding out how parents feel about the school their child is attending. This information may be used to improve our schools and I hope that you will find the time to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and promptly return it. All responses are completely confidential.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping.

Sincerely,



Alexander J. Radzik,  
Principal

/d

APPENDIX C

Interview Check List



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