

1-1-1981

# Parent participation in the educational process: a study of the attitudes of parents and educators of children with special needs.

Barbara Stein Nagler  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1)

---

## Recommended Citation

Nagler, Barbara Stein, "Parent participation in the educational process: a study of the attitudes of parents and educators of children with special needs." (1981). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 3704.  
[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1/3704](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/3704)

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).



312066013295579

PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS:  
A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS  
OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A Dissertation Presented

By

BARBARA STEIN NAGLER

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1981

School of Education

Barbara Stein Nagler

1981

c

All Rights Reserved

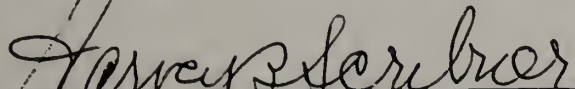
PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS:  
A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS  
OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A Dissertation Presented

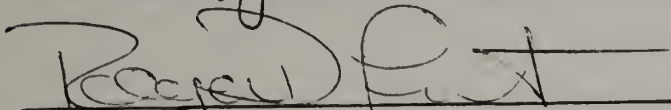
By

BARBARA STEIN NAGLER

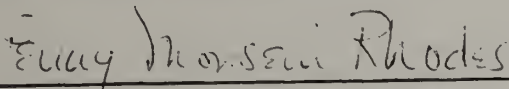
Approved as to the style and content by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Harvey Scribner, Chairperson

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Roger Frant, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Penny Monsein Rhodes, Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Mario D. Fantini, Dean  
School of Education

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to  
my best friend and husband,  
Sylvain,

and to my children,  
Alisa, Jonathan and Joshua  
for their continual encouragement,  
assistance and love

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dissertation is not undertaken and completed without the support and assistance of many individuals. Thus, I feel it appropriate at this time to acknowledge those persons for their varying roles in this project.

I thank Dr. Harvey Scribner, chairperson of my doctoral committee, Dr. Roger Frant and Dr. Penny Monsein Rhodes, members of my doctoral committee. Their encouragement and support enabled me to complete this study.

A special thanks to Dr. Jane Miller of the Special Education Department who skillfully took me step-by-step through the dissertation process.

I am indebted to Howard J. Eberwein, Special Education Director, Pittsfield Public Schools, for enabling me to run the research and to the parents and educators for participating. It wouldn't have happened without them.

I am grateful to Tage and Margaret "Betsy" Andersson who unselfishly allowed me to use their computer and made room in their lives to help me complete this study.

For the EXPERT typing of the Tables in this study, I thank my husband, Sylvain.

Special appreciation is offered to the wonderful people in the Special Education Department at the University of Massachusetts, and the Early Childhood Education Center, Altamont, New York and to the many caring people for their interest and encouragement, I am lucky and thankful.

To my parents, Libby and Michael Stein; my sisters and brothers; Ellen and Steven Stein, Debra and Arthur Friedman, Doreen and David Cohen and Andrea and Charles Nagler for their faith immeasurable, thanks.

A deep and warm "thank you" to my dear friends, Pearl and Carl Mindell and children for helping me believe I could accomplish anything I set out to do.

To Sylvain, Alisa, Jonathan and Joshua who believed in me and gave of themselves, my love always.

ABSTRACT

Parent Participation In The Educational Process:  
A Study Of The Attitudes of Parents and Educators  
Of Children With Special Needs

(May 1981)

Barbara Stein Nagler, B.S., Empire State College  
M.A., College of St. Rose  
Ed.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Dr. Harvey Scribner

In the past decade, significant national attention has focused on the changing home-school relationship. In part, at least, this attention stems from a heightened concern that parents be more involved in their children's all around development. The character of parent involvement in the schools has long been a subject of controversy. The advent of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, brings to special education a mandate for schools to include parents in educational decision-making concerning their children's program. The statutory guidelines provided in the law furnish a catalyst for developing new relationships between educator and parent but without defining the specific form the participation and collaboration will assume. This study examined the beliefs of both educators and parents of special needs children about the concept of parent participation, the form it might take, and the ways the process might be implemented effectively.



The setting for the study was an urban public school district in western Massachusetts. The data were collected by means of a mailed questionnaire sent to all of the professional personnel in the special education program and a random sample of parents of children with educational needs. The questionnaire sought information on; the respondents' beliefs of roles parents should assume, estimates of the frequency of participation in those roles, activities to enhance the relationship between parents and educators, and willingness to participate in those activities.

✓ An analysis of the results of the study indicates that there is general agreement between parents and educators supporting the concept of parent participation. There is also agreement between the two groups on the particular roles parents should and should not assume in the educational process. Roles relating to parents providing educational support for their children and for participating in educational decision-making were ranked the highest. Direct parent involvement in the classroom was rated negatively by both groups. However, parents and educators differed in their estimates of frequency of parents' current participation. Parents believed they are more involved in particular roles than educators perceive them to be.

A measure of congruence was devised in order to determine the extent to which subjects' perceptions of roles parents should play were consonant with their estimates of the frequency of roles they do play. Significant differences were found between parents and educators. On ten of the fourteen items parents achieved higher congruent coefficients. The implications of these data for program planning and future research are discussed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	v
ABSTRACT . . . . .	vi
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Parent Involvement in the Educational Process	1
Parents Rights as Defined by PL94-142 . . . . .	9
Parents and Educators . . . . .	11
Purpose of Study . . . . .	15
Limitation of the Study . . . . .	16
Significance of the Study . . . . .	17
Design of the Study . . . . .	18
Administration of the Study . . . . .	19
Analysis of the Results . . . . .	20
Organization of the Study . . . . .	21
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	23
Introduction . . . . .	23
Historical Perspective: Attitudes Toward the handicapped . . . . .	24
History of Education Laws for the Handicapped	27
Parents in the Educational Process . . . . .	34
Dynamics and Influences on Parent-Educator Interactions . . . . .	42
Professionals Perceptions of Parent Involvement . . . . .	46
III. METHODOLOGY . . . . .	51
The Setting and Population . . . . .	52
Data Collection Methods . . . . .	54
Administration of the Survey . . . . .	63
Analysis of the Results . . . . .	66
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS . . .	74
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample . . .	74
Parent Responses to the Questionnaire . . .	77
Educator Responses to the Questionnaire . . .	84

Measuring the Coefficient of Congruence . . . . .	95
Measuring the Congruence of Parent Responses . . . . .	96
Measuring the Congruence of Educator Responses . . . . .	117
Congruence Analysis of Parent and Educator Responses . . . . .	133
Respondents Suggestions to Enhance the Parent-School Relationship . . . . .	137
V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS . . . . .	143
Interpretations of the Findings . . . . .	146
Implications of the Findings . . . . .	149
Recommendations for Further Research . . . . .	151
. . . . .	
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	153
APPENDIX . . . . .	160

## LIST OF TABLES

1.	Comparison of Age of Child for Original Sample and Respondents . . . . .	65
2.	Comparison of Sex of Child for Original Sample and Respondents . . . . .	66
3.	Respondents' Demographic Data . . . . .	75
4.	Parent Beliefs about Roles Parents Should Play . . . . .	78
5.	Parent Beliefs about Roles Parents Do Play . . . . .	80
6.	Comparison of Parent Beliefs about Roles Parents Should and Do Play . . . . .	82
7.	Parent Estimates of the Degree of Helpfulness of the Proposed Activities . . . . .	85
8.	Parent Willingness to Participate in Proposed Activities . . . . .	86
9.	Educator Beliefs about the Roles Parents Should Play . . . . .	87
10.	Educator Beliefs about the Roles Parents Do Play . . . . .	89
11.	A Comparison of Educator Beliefs about Roles Parents Should and Do Play . . . . .	90
12.	Educator estimates of the Degree of Helpfulness of the Proposed Activities . . . . .	93
13.	Educator Willingness to Participate in Proposed Activities . . . . .	94
14.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parent for Items 1-14 . . . . .	97
15.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #1 . . . . .	99
16.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #2 . . . . .	100
17.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #3 . . . . .	101
18.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #4 . . . . .	103
19.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #5 . . . . .	104
20.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #6 . . . . .	106
21.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do By Parents for Item #7 . . . . .	107
22.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #8 . . . . .	108
23.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #9 . . . . .	110

24.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #10 . . . . .	111
25.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #11 . . . . .	112
26.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #12 . . . . .	114
27.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #13 . . . . .	115
28.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Parents for Item #14 . . . . .	116
29.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Items #1-14 . . . . .	118
30.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #1 . . . . .	119
31.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #2 . . . . .	121
32.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #3 . . . . .	122
33.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #4 . . . . .	123
34.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #5 . . . . .	125
35.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #6 . . . . .	126
36.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #7 . . . . .	127
37.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #8 . . . . .	128
38.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #9 . . . . .	130
39.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #10 . . . . .	131
40.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #11 . . . . .	132
41.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #12 . . . . .	134
42.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Item #13 . . . . .	135
43.	Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis of Should and Do by Educators for Items #14 . . . . .	136
44.	Congruence Analysis of Parent and Educator Responses . . . . .	138
45.	Activities to Enhance Parent-Educator Relationship	141
46.	Does Parent Participation Have an Impact on Educational Decision Making? . . . . .	141
47.	Analysis of Open-Ended Comments . . . . .	142

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Parent Involvement in the Educational Process

The extent and character of parent involvement in a children's education remain a subject of considerable controversy and dilemma. Historically, Title I programs have been the principal federal vehicle for aiding disadvantaged children. A major intent of Title I is to encourage parent involvement in the educational process, by requiring all school districts to include parents as architects of and consultants to newly funded programs. It does not specifically require parents to be active participants in the child's educational program (Nebgen, 1979). In contrast, in the case of children with handicapping conditions, recent federal legislation demands an examination and resolution of the aforementioned controversy by virtue of the legislative mandate to involve parents in the educational decision-making process. The enactment of PL94-142 represents a legislative attempt at the national level to describe in precise language the roles and responsibilities of parents vis-a-vis local educational agencies.

Questions of how schools should relate to parents and how parents should be involved in the schools have always

been complex and controversial (Davis, 1973). The role of parents in the schooling of their children has undergone many changes coincidental with broader political and economic shifts in the society. In colonial America the education of children resided primarily with the church and the child's family (Katz, 1971). To a significant extent, this was a natural consequence of the rural character of the country at that time. Families in the various communities determined who was hired to be the teacher (typically of a one room school house) and what was to be taught (beside the three R's, a heavy concentration of religious studies).

The massive migration to the cities, which coincided with the rise of industrialization in the country, also gave rise to the urban school. These schools were considerably larger in size than the previously known country school house, and as the number of students increased in these schools a new relationship between professional and family emerged. To satisfy the need for governance, a task which had been previously assumed by the informal participation of the community's families, school boards were established to represent community members. By the turn of the twentieth century, school boards, and professional educators (now including administrators as well as teachers) assumed responsibility for influencing school policy and teaching their own middle class values (Katz, 1971). Final decision



making was nominally, at least, still in the hands of the governing boards. The change from parent governed schools to school boards and professionally run schools remained until the present. Parents continued to be excluded from educational decision making.

To better understand the limitations of the role of parents in the educational system one must examine the philosophy and structure of the current system and trace its evolution. Michael Katz (1971) defines the current educational model as an "Incipient Bureaucracy." It is a large, carefully structured system of education. Its basic component is free education, governed by a centralized monopoly (a state board of education), whose management is publicly elected and is responsible to its constituents. Graded schools and professionally trained staff are also included in "Incipient Bureaucracy." This model is a logical application of the premise that education "should lead and not reflect the general will of the public" (Katz, p.51). Parent involvement in the schools is limited to the schools' discretion. The professional staff is given the responsibility to teach the public, and not necessarily reflect the public's values.

It is important to note that this model emerged as the dominant structure out of an intersection of political,

economic and social forces. The three other competing models that Katz describes would have resulted in a different quality and degree of involvement by parents, citizens and lay people. The three other models he described are 1) paternalistic voluntarism; 2) democratic localism; and 3) corporate voluntarism.

Paternalistic Voluntarism, like Incipient bureaucracy, was also a large scale education system. The Paternalistic Voluntarism system, begun about 1805, was run by amateur managers, usually wealthy men doing benevolent work for poor children. A major concept of Paternalistic Voluntarism was its promotion of free schooling only for the poor. It was not concerned with the training of teachers, and scorned state control or the need for electorate organization. The basic philosophy rested on the faith of individuals to know education and administration. The ultimate decline and disappearance of Paternalistic Voluntarism was a result its rather obvious class bias. The upper-class clearly imposed its values on the lower class. There was no elected body, and Paternalistic Voluntarism was not in any reasonable way responsible to the consumer group. Parents of the children attending the schools were not allowed any participation. Critics declared Paternalistic voluntarism undemocratic and hostile to the democratic principles of the nation.

Paternalistic Voluntarism was followed by "Democratic Localism," in the 1840's, which advocated independent, small scale administration by each local school district. Democratic Localism was based on the concept of the rural school and assumed that administration on a small scale would more responsively reflect the needs and desires of each community. All the school districts were overseen by a Board of Commissioners with limited powers. As it strongly advocated parent control, its major premise was that each individual school be under the control of the community composed merely of the families having children in the school. The philosophy was anti-professional in nature and relied for its survival on the good faith of the district population who were assumed capable to design and carry out an equitable system. The decline of Democratic Localism resulted from the mistaken assumption that small, rural districts were necessarily homogeneous in character. In fact, districts were not homogeneous and 51% of the population could dictate the religious, moral and political ideas to all children, causing factions to develop and compete with each other for control.

Corporate Voluntarism also advocated small scale management. Business was conducted by amateur management in a single unit, individual corporation model, with a self perpetuating Board of Trustees. Like Democratic Localism,

Corporate Voluntarism, advocated freedom from government control. However, as there was little distinction between public and private programs in the 1850's, the states frequently gave land grants to all kinds of schools. Although the corporate voluntarism model was to produce a non-exclusive school open to all, the growing popularity of the truly public high school provided considerable competition. It was the increasing influence of the Incipient Bureaucracy model which led to the success of the public high school, and in the process, led to the demise of Corporate Voluntarism. Although including citizen participation, Corporate Voluntarism was not public in nature. Schools administered through this model were not established by the public, supported by the public, controlled by the public nor did they provide equal access. All three models, other than Incipient Bureaucracy, included citizen involvement but were not public in character and therefore did not incorporate only public accountability. Incipient bureaucracy triumphed because it promised to be apolitical, neutral and managerially competent. It also seemed most adapted to the urban school, an appealing characteristic given the population shifts to the cities. It triumphed for these reasons while, at the same time, limiting citizen involvement.

By the turn of the century, citizen involvement was not

a part of the education system. When parents wanted involvement in the school they were typically given advice by the professional on methods of parenting (Nedler and McAfee, 1979). Parent involvement was fostered by informally organized groups of middle-class parents. In 1908 the concept of the Parent-Teacher Association, the PTA was born (Nedler and McAfee, 1979). These groups of parents indicated interest in learning about the developing science of child psychology from the professionals. The establishment of PTA's can be seen as a final developmental stage which began with parents first assuming a major role in the process of schooling their children and culminating in having the professional educator become recognized as the knower and teacher of both children and their families. Teachers were now teaching parents about their children. Professionals held this role until the civil rights movement of the 1950's. The trend may now be shifting as the result of recent federal laws which are redefining the relationship between professional and parent.

In the past twenty-five years the controversy of how schools should relate to parents and how parents should be involved in the schools has heightened. As part of the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, the urban poor challenged existing patterns of social control. Such challenges have broadened into a wider challenge about the

ways consumers of public services, which includes the educational system, should relate to the providers of the service (Fantini, 1974). The federal government responded to the voices of discontent (and the courts) by promoting the concept of citizen participation, and increasingly included provisions for citizen involvement in human service legislation in the early 1970's.

The general success of the citizen participation movement spread to particular groups of dissatisfied consumers within the educational system. One such group was the parents of children with handicapping conditions. Organized parent groups such as the Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC) and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD), challenged the schools through the courts on the educational rights of their children. They questioned the denial of their children's right to a public education, the quality of the education, and the decision-making process (PARC, 1972; Mills, 1972). Parents of children with handicapping conditions challenged the states for a free public program of education and the courts responded in favor of the parents. The federal government adopted new regulations for the educationally handicapped which mandated the schools to include parents in their children's education (PL94-142).

Parents Rights as Defined by PL94-142

By statute, states are responsible for and control education. "Federal education programs, even though they provide on the average less than 8% of the cost of running local schools began to stimulate new programs and increasingly shaped policies and practices" (Davis, 1978). By the early 1970's, few states already had legislation for the handicapped. Other states began to follow the federal government's lead of including citizen involvement in their education regulations.

The new Federal Education for all Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142) is modeled upon the Massachusetts Comprehensive Special Education Law Chapter 766, passed in 1972. Through Chapter 766 and PL94-142 statutory guidelines clearly set forth and define the character and extent of parent involvement. Both laws require parental consent to place a child in a special program, and the laws provide parents with the right to participate in the development of their child's special education plans. The regulations are requiring a new form of involvement and participation by parents in the educational system, the implications of which have not yet been totally realized.

Legislation on the federal and state levels establishes

the foundation for a newly developing relationship between parents and educators. Complex human situations are reduced to abstract mandates. The law defines a change in existing relationships but not the character of that change. Increased powers for parents are clearly implied, but the particulars of the laws are phrased in broad terms. Parents' consent to the child's individualized educational program is required (Sec. 121a504). Behind the concept of "consent" is the belief that there is an understanding of the educational program. How is consent defined? How is the "program" defined? Should the program include services not provided by the school? How is the school to include parents in the process of developing the educational program so that the parents will understand and approve it? The wording of the legislation, while more specific than any other education legislation in the past, appears to be deliberately vague to soften the impact of such a radical change. Allowing school personnel to develop the mechanisms of the relationship in ways that are specific and applicable to each school may have contributed to the legislation's passage.

Inexact or vague wording is rather common in legislative and judicial language. An example of inexact wording is the call for "maximum feasible participation" in Title I and similar anti-poverty legislation of the sixties. The statement implies that there shall be participation, but the



specifics of that participation are not clear. This vague or broad wording leaves the participants involved with the responsibility to define the mechanisms and specifics of the relationship.

### Parents and Educators

While the need to redefine the relationship between parents and educators now exists, it is essential to understand the current dynamics and the complexity of the facilitating and inhibiting forces involved in including parents in the educational process. The facilitating forces include the new federal regulations, research acknowledging and supporting the importance of parents in their child's education and individuals who actively encourage a positive home-school relationship.

It is only when we view the asymmetric relationship between parents and educators as a dynamic process that we will gain a greater understanding of the nature of the relationship, the conflict and the potential for resolution. The perceived lack of support for the active involvement of parents of handicapped children is symptomatic of attitudes concerning parents in general that exist within the entire educational system. Relatively few parents of "normal" children perceive themselves as a working team member in the

planning or evaluation of their child's education and many parents feel alienated from schools (Markel, 1978).

This alienation and conflict between professionals and parents may be caused by the current educational system (Fantini, 1974). The same "Incipient Bureaucracy" described by Katz (1971) is seen by Fantini as an outdated monolithic institution unable to respond to twentieth century needs. Professionals and parents blame each other for dissatisfactions in the school rather than blaming the system that produces them. As schools grew and became more complex, basic educational information became specialized and the entire process privileged, further excluding parents from direct participation.

Credentialing procedures have created some problems. Besides preventing particular groups from entering the profession, they have created distinct groups defined as knowers (teachers) and not-knowers (parents). The teaching profession has grown stronger and more organized with teachers working against the forces of administrators and consumers. In turn, the need for teachers to seek protection in a strong organization and to become an exclusionary group has various origins. Teachers tend to be defensive about their professional status, their occupational image, and their special skills and abilities. Most parents are viewed

as a critical force that, if permitted to interfere, would threaten the teachers's already insecure professional status and self-image (Lightfoot, 1978).

The issues surrounding parents and their involvement in the educational process are as diverse and confusing as those of educators. In contrast to teachers, parents have been slow to organize themselves into groups to represent their interests. Social scientists and the media have created the illusion of one organized parent group with ready made opinions which influence teacher performance (Goodacre, 1970; Lightfoot, 1978). Parents needs and expectations, however, differ. Their views of the educational process and the "average" teacher are based on their own childhood experiences and on the image of teachers as presented in literature, films and the mass media generally. The latter representation of the teacher represents society's views about the role and functions of the teacher in our particular social system. The general picture, until recently, was the teacher as sacrosanct, expected to be a conformist and representative of conventional middle-class values. These values may be in conflict with many families, but particularly minority families.

Parents have the responsibility for raising their child. At a prescribed age the child must attend school. Having

tended and cared for their child, parents are, not surprisingly, likely to be concerned about what happens to the child. The concern may be for the good of the child rather than the abstract social value of education (Kelly, 1974). When parents ask schools to give special attention to their child, they are asking the school to take an exceptional position. Schools are designed for large populations and are universalistic in character. Even those teachers who believe in an individual approach to teaching and diagnose the special needs of each child have universalistic standards and generalized goals. Parents are concerned about their child, teachers concern themselves with the children. Parents are emotionally involved with their children, teachers have a generalized relationship with the children which allows for them to disengage at the end of the year (Lightfoot, 1978).

For both parents and teachers there is a degree of role conflict. Parents may be uncertain of their "role" as parents and what is expected of them in relation to the school. There is a need to clarify and articulate areas of parent participation and to make clear the spheres over which teachers have ultimate and uncompromising authority and those areas where collaboration with parents could be an educational and creative venture.

### Purpose of Study

The issue of parent involvement in the educational process is vital to all concerned--parents, educators and the children. There are signs that educational personnel and parents of children with handicapping conditions are beginning to accept its general principles (Schraft, 1978; Feldman et al., 1975). An underlying belief of this researcher is that such participation is valuable and desirable. It is further believed that parent involvement in special education is a trend with ramifications for all of education.

Problems that might reduce the chances for successful implementation and development of parent participation in the schools are threefold: 1) negative attitudes which, however subtle, present barriers to the proposed active involvement of parents in the placement and planning process; 2) existing power relationships which resist change; and 3) new laws which are written specifically for children with special education needs and so tacitly preserve the traditional relationship of educators and parents of non-handicapped children. Indeed, the power relationships as well as the roles of education personnel vis-a-vis parents have become complicated by new mandates, and there are few precedents to follow. Without precedents to follow, schools are following

the letter, not the intent, of the law and new approaches need to be developed to make the mechanism work well.

As few studies have examined the attitudes of parents and educators toward parent participation, this study will seek to delineate those attitudes as espoused by parents and educators of children with special needs. A review of the existing literature will examine issues that affect parent-professional interactions and perceptions of parent participation. Research will address the following primary questions: Does a discrepancy exist between the legislative intent and prevailing attitudes among parents and educators? Does a similar discrepancy exist between the roles educators and parents believe parents should play and parents believe parents should play and the roles they currently do play? And finally, the dissertation as a whole will explore the parameters of the parent-child-teacher relationship in order to provide information that will encourage parents and educators to collaborate successfully.

#### Limitations of the Study

The following limitations apply to the research proposed:

1. The research is limited to parents of special needs children and education personnel working with special needs

children.

2. The information is obtained from an urban school district comprised of 10,000 students, 11% of whom are classified as having special educational needs. Comparisons are therefore limited to school districts exhibiting similar characteristics.

3. The demographic data are limited to age and sex of respondent, severity of handicapping conditions, number of years teaching children with special needs, number of years child in special education classes, age of children with special needs and sex of child.

4. A questionnaire format, as opposed to direct interview, was chosen because of the sample size. This precludes an indepth exploration of specific questions.

#### Significance of the Study

PL94-142 and Massachusetts Chapter 766 mandate parent participation in the educational process of children with special needs. While there are articles which have appeared in the literature generally supporting the concept of a parent-professional partnership (Turnbull, 1975; Exceptional Children, entire issue, May, 1975), only a limited number of empirical studies have been published which specifically examine attitudes regarding the relationship of special

educators and parents. This research will examine the beliefs of both professional educators and parents of special needs children about parent participation in the educational process for special education children. This study offers research data and conclusions specifically relevant to the interaction process of special educators and parents of children with special needs.

### Design of the Study

The principal objective of this research is to acquire data which will provide a better understanding of the attitudes of parents and educators about parent participation in the educational process.

The Setting and Population. This investigation will involve administrators, teachers and parents of children with special educational needs in an urban school district in Massachusetts. The pupil enrollment for the 1980-1981 school year is about 10,000 students, 11% of whom are classified as having special educational needs. A random sample of 25% of the parents of children who are enrolled in special education classes and all school personnel (teachers and administrators) in the special education pupil personnel department will serve as subjects.

Data Gathering. The survey instrument will be a questionnaire comprised of four sections:



1. A survey of the respondents' attitudes regarding the efficacy/wisdom of having parents participate in different aspects of their children's education.
2. A survey of the respondents' impressions about the extent to which each of the above activity areas are being undertaken by parents in the public school.
3. A survey of the respondents' opinions about the efficacy of introducing various programs to facilitate a cooperative interaction between parents and school personnel.
4. A survey of the respondents' willingness to participate in any such programs.

#### Administration of the Survey

The survey instrument will be pilot-tested on 10% of the population and the adjusted questionnaires will be mailed to all parents who have children enrolled in special education classes and to all school personnel associated with the special education program. Stamped and self-addressed reply envelopes will be provided along with a letter explaining the objective of the project and pointing out that all the questionnaires will be anonymous. Respondents will be invited to contact the investigator to ask questions regarding the project. It is expected that these interviews will be discussed in the analysis of the research. Following the initial distribution of the survey, a reminder letter

will be mailed to the entire sample requesting those who did not return the questionnaire to do so. It is anticipated that the completion of the survey questionnaire should take about 30 minutes. Respondents will also be informed that each person in the sample will be mailed a brief summary of the results along with an invitation to attend a meeting with the investigator to discuss the results and review the implications.

### Analysis of the Results

The survey findings from the attitude questionnaires will be statistically analyzed to provide the following:

1. A summary of educators' responses regarding the role parents should play and do play in the education process.
2. A summary of parents responses regarding the role parents should play and do play in the education process.
3. Ratings of educators and parents views of the helpfulness of ten activities for improving the parent-educator relationship.
4. A report of the willingness of parents and educators to participate in the ten activities list in #3 above.

Areas of agreement can be a predictor of the ease with which parents and educators will work together. Areas of disagreement will imply need for development of program

inservices or other strategies aimed at improving the parent-educator working relationship.

### Organization of the Study

The dissertation will consist of five chapters in addition to a bibliography and related appendices.

Chapter I: Introduction. This chapter will provide an overview of the study. It will contain an introduction to the problem area, a statement of purpose of the study, significance and limitations. The introduction will present a historical perspective of parent involvement in the educational process and continue through to the present. The complexity of the issues of including parents in the education process will be discussed. The "statement of purpose" will clarify the objectives of the study. The "significance of the study" will discuss the contribution to the field and the "limitations" will outline the constraints and drawbacks. The "design" and "organization" of the study will be described.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature. The review of the literature will be divided into two components. The first will be a historical perspective on attitudes toward the handicapped and citizen participation. The second component

will be a review of the literature relating to issues that directly impact on the parent-professional relationship. Subtopics will include: 1. Parents in the Educational Process; 2. Parents Rights as Defined by PL94-142; 3. The Individual Education Plan and 4. Dynamics and Influences on Parent-Educator Interactions.

Chapter III: Methodology. This chapter will detail the research methods employed in the study. The setting and population will be described. The development of the instrument, steps in data collection and methods of data analysis will be presented.

Chapter IV: Results of the Study. The findings will provide: 1. An index of attitudes of parents and teachers attitudes toward parent participation in the educational process; 2. A comparison of the attitudes of the two groups; 3. An analysis of their attitudes toward specific activities and willingness to participate in those activities. A descriptive presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data will be presented.

Chapter V: Recommendations and Conclusions. The final chapter will present a summary of significant findings and the investigator's conclusion about those findings. Implications for further study will be discussed.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Until recently public schools were not legally required to involve parents in their children's education. New educational laws for handicapped students, PL94-142 and Massachusetts Law Chapter 766 have changed that position. What follows is a comprehensive review of the literature, tracing the evolution of parent involvement in the education of handicapped child with particular emphasis on two aspects: the first historical, the second socio-psychological. The first approach highlights the historical factors which led to the movement toward greater participation by parents and examines attitudinal changes toward the handicapped. The second approach highlights the socio-psychological influences and examines the dynamics which affect the teacher-parent interaction. Included in this section are a review of the current literature on the parents' role in the educational process, dynamics that influence the parent-educator relationship and current research findings on attitudes regarding parent involvement in the educational process.

### Historical Perspective: Attitudes toward the handicapped

In tracing the origins and history of education for the handicapped, it is worthwhile to proceed from the broader historical perspective, examining attitudes toward and treatment of exceptional individuals. The general public's response to special individuals has been to isolate them. However, they were also executed, tortured, sterilized and sometimes considered divine (Hewett and Forness, 1977). For example, in the United States, the early Puritans believed that deviant behavior was explainable in terms of supernatural forces, and are believed to have acted on that assumption, executing many such persons (Wolfensberger, 1972). Subsequent responses to behavioral deviants may not have been so final but remained cruel for many years. Any aberrant citizen, including people with physical and psychological abnormalities, paupers, criminals, and the like, were identified as being sufficiently homogeneous in character to justify casting them together in institutions like prisons, poor houses, and asylums without any serious regard for apparent differences among them (Wolfensberger, 1975).

The French revolution marked a considerable shift in the public's response to handicapped people. The revolutionary spirit brought with it a sense of social conscience and

responsibility which previously had been essentially absent or dormant in public behavior. Programmatic efforts aimed at gaining a better understanding and offering more humane and effective treatment of the handicapped emerged. The most prominent effort in this regard was the work of the Paris physician Phillipe Pinel, followed later by the contribution of Sicard and Itard. The major thrust of their work was to identify persons with handicapping conditions and to separate them from the "criminal element," thereby facilitating the development of educational techniques specifically designed to service the handicapped. Based on this social movement in France, Edward Sequin established similar kinds of programs in the United States in the late 19th Century (Lane, 1976).

The late 19th Century was an era of rapid change in both the conception and treatment of persons with handicapping conditions. Specialized educational techniques were developed for teaching handicapped students. Small farm colonies were established which were designed to teach handicapped students very practical skills which they could use to become productive members of the larger society. The objective was to train the handicapped in order to facilitate their return to the community (Wolfensberger, 1975). However, this orientation experienced major reversals after only a brief history. With the industrial revolution in this

country came waves of immigrants. Immigrants found themselves working in factories in ever increasing numbers. The factory work was generally unsafe, and work related accidents became the rule rather than the exception (Hewett and Forness, 1977). At the same time, the new waves of immigrants caused considerable alarm in the country in terms of racial degeneration. The substantial increase in the number of persons being diagnosed as retarded and handicapped, coupled with the fear of class-mixing (which gave rise to the eugenics movement in this country), caused a departure from the previous policies of using the farm colonies as educational settings designed to retrain its clientele. The institutions became increasingly overcrowded by virtue of unselective admissions policies; that is, the colonies became the dumping grounds for all deviants in the same way that penal institutions in Europe had assumed this function (Wolfensberger, 1975). As the institutions became more and more crowded, it became apparent that to maintain them additional staff would need to be recruited. There was no public interest in allocating more finances to the institutions so the inevitable occurred. The most able bodied and psychologically competent clients, rather than being returned to the communities, were retained to assume staff responsibilities. It is unlikely the institutions could have continued to function in their absence.



At the same time, on the legal front, the eugenics movement elicited sufficient support to have states pass legislation legalizing the sterilization of the handicapped (e.g., Buck v Bell, 1927). Thus, the salutary alternatives confronting the handicapped were limited. Although there were some efforts at incorporating special classes in the public schools in the early 1900's, they were generally very poorly supported and the criteria for admission were arbitrary and without much educational rationale (Hewett and Forness, 1977). The catastrophe of the depression and the world war which followed, paralyzed any further efforts to institute reforms (Wolfensberger, 1971). The institutional population continued to grow until the 1950's.

#### History of Education Laws for the Handicapped

It was not really until the civil rights struggle emerged in the 1950's that any changes in the public's stance toward the handicapped occurred (Hewett and Forness, 1977). While the civil rights struggle initially focused on the plight of blacks in the south, oppressed minority groups in general began to identify themselves and become identified by activists as also needing government and political assistance to gain their just position in the society. A broadly based series of legislation was enacted reflecting society's

increased sensitivity to the plight of previously neglected and abused groups. Specific to the education of the handicapped, federal legislative provisions established grants for research and personnel training (Burello and Sage, 1979). Thus, the federal government became involved in the education of handicapped children but only through research and training. It refrained from any direct intervention in the actual schooling operation.

Educational opportunities for the handicapped remained limited. The civil rights activism in the 1950's and 1960's rekindled a belief in self determination. Parents of handicapped children and their professional allies joined forces, launching and maintaining crusades to obtain educational services for their children. The impact of such crusades is evident in the legislative changes that led to the current special education laws.

The landmark integration case in 1954, Brown v The Board of Education, marked the first major change in policy. The government was here establishing its right to apply constitutional provisions to become actively involved in the schooling process which till then had been the domain of the states. In this particular case the issue related to the inequality of segregated educational practices.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided a statutory basis in federal law for desegregating public education. Title VI specifically prohibits discrimination against any person because of race, color, or national origin in any program receiving federal assistance. The Office of Civil Rights was established within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to enforce this provision. The government was presumably putting muscle behind its mandates by controlling the purse strings.

The prestigious federal circuit court in Washington, D.C. went beyond the Warren court. In 1967 Judge Skelly Wright, writing for the majority and invoking the 14th amendment, ruled not only that segregated practices were unconstitutional but that, insofar as the tracking of students achieved the same objective, it too was unconstitutional. Following the Wright decision, two court cases in the state of California called into question the validity of using standardized IQ as the basis for establishing eligibility for placement into special classes. Both Diana v California State Board of Education (1969) and Larry v Riles (1971) found that minority group children were being placed in special classes for the retarded in disproportionate numbers. They attributed the fact to the

cultural bias inherent in the testing instruments being used.

These court decisions indicate the change in public attitudes toward government involvement in educational practices (to the extent that court decisions are reflections of powerful forces within the society). Federal and state courts were making rulings based on judgments concerning the efficacy of school practices and the validity of psychometric tools. Beginning in the 1970's the courts went a step beyond and involved themselves in the controversy about whom the state is required to educate and, to some extent, how this education will be carried out. In January 1971, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) initiated a class action suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania charging the state with the failure to provide free educational services for all of its retarded children. The federal district court ruled that the State had no constitutional right to postpone, to terminate, or to deny any retarded child access to a public education (PARC v Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Consent agreement, 1972). The language was unambiguous. The precedent clearly established. The states needed to respond. In 1972 (Mills v Board of Education of the District of Columbia) the courts extended the principle still a little further by ruling that the severity of the handicap was not cause for excluding such

youngsters from access to public education.

The two cases included issues relating to the manner in which children with handicapping conditions were identified, evaluated and placed. Consequently, both decisions also addressed due process provisions which had to be established to protect the constitutional principle articulated in the decisions.

The court decisions served as a major catalyst for individual states to concern themselves with the issues raised in the law suits and many states around the country passed new statutes and regulations concerning the education of children with handicapping conditions. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Special Education Law, Chapter 766, was passed in 1972 and became effective in September 1974. There was no federal law comparable in comprehensiveness to Massachusetts Chapter 766.

Pressure continued to emanate from the federal level of government, but now from the legislative branch as well as the judiciary. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Amendments of 1973 (PL93-112) set forth the consequences on non-compliance with federal law regarding services to the handicapped. Institutions found to be in non-compliance

risked having their federal monies terminated. What the congress had not then done was to mandate that which the courts had ruled, i.e., that educational opportunity could not be denied because of a handicapping condition. However, such mandates seemed to be looming in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, in 1974 the Congress passed PL93-380 which required that states had to establish a goal of providing full educational opportunity to all children from birth to age 21 if they were handicapped. Coinciding with this provision was the mandate that states establish appropriate mechanisms to "find" all children with handicapping conditions ages birth to 21. No timetable accompanied the law, and states were permitted to delay implementation without penalty. To some extent the passage of PL93-380 can be interpreted as federal posturing. The federal bureaucracy was not prepared to mandate more specific provisions (perhaps because of the lack of funding available for implementation) but hoped that states would experience increased pressure to raise the standards of services for special education, both in terms of who was being served and the quality and extent of the services.

It remained for parents of the handicapped and professionals serving the handicapped to join forces, form a

political coalition, and lobby for more rapid implementation of these new laws. More and more cases of educational exclusion were being documented by researchers, parents and public interest groups. More and more cases of inappropriate educational services for the handicapped were being revealed. It became clear that there were large numbers of children with handicapping conditions who were not receiving the educational services they needed and were entitled to legally. As a result of this powerful lobbying effort, in 1975 Congress passed and President Gerald Ford signed into law PL94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, a bill of rights for handicapped children. This act represented the continued evolution of federal responsibility and commitment to the provision of equal educational opportunities to minority group and handicapped children.

In a little more than a hundred years, the goals for educating the handicapped have undergone three major phases: 1. Segregation for the purpose of educating and then integrating the handicapped back into the community; 2. Segregation as a goal in and of itself; 3. Integration in the form of mainstreaming i.e. educating the special needs child in the most normalized setting possible or, as PL94-142 states "in the least restrictive environment" (Miller, 1979).

### Parents in the Educational Process

Both schools and parents are concerned about the child's welfare. It would be reasonable to assume that they would be natural allies in their common endeavor. Ironically, the previously discussed history demonstrates that there has been and continues to be dissonance in the relationship.

The school is a boundary between the roles of parents and educators. Tensions appear as the boundary lines are approached and disturbed. Part of the dissonance appears to be the unclear boundaries and the ambiguities of the roles of parents and educators. The tensions are primarily focused on who should be in control of the child's life in school and who is responsible for the child's educational success.

The following discussion of the parents role, parents rights as defined by PL94-142, and parents and individual education plans elucidates the boundaries and points of tension.

The Parents Role. The legal responsibility for raising children in this society is vested in parents (Goldstein, Freud and Solnit, 1973). Parents are also responsible for providing their children with an education (Kelly, 1974). Parents choose the schools they want their children to



attend, a right limited only by society's insistence that schools adhere to basic safety and quality standards for buildings, materials, curriculum and staff competence. The states have been charged with the responsibility of providing the source for children's education which is, in turn, delegated to the schools.

Thus, schools are not merely a creation of the states. They belong to the taxpayers. Because parents pay for their schools, they have a right to determine, through representatives, how schools operate, what will be taught and how their children will be educated (Kelly, 1974).

In the past decade, significant national attention has focused on the changing home-school relationship. In part, at least, this attention stems from a heightened concern on the part of parents that they should be more involved in their children's all around development (Hetherington and Parke, 1979; Friedman, 1977). This includes the child's cognitive as well as psychological growth, and has led to increased parental concern about children's schooling experience (Kappelman, and Ackerman, 1977). To support this movement, a growing body of research literature seeks to verify the principle that parents have a major influence on the development of their children (Guralnick, 1978;

Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

Parents have also emerged as a growing political force confronting child related issues. For example, parents were highly successful in bringing litigation against selected states in an effort to establish the constitutional rights of their children to a public education (PARC, 1972 and Mills, 1972).

Court decisions and federal legislation have assured parents of moderately and severely handicapped children that appropriate educational services should be provided for those children. Previously parents needed to assume nearly all the responsibility for designing and implementing a meaningful program for such a youngster or have the youngster placed in a residential home. Now, at least in theory, parents who once needed to ask schools for special programs and found few available can approach a school system and legally oblige them to define or develop appropriate services for their child (Michaelis, 1980). The relationship between parent and educator has been changed by the law. Parents and professionals now begin the process of interaction by defining the educational program which will be pursued rather than negotiating for the existence of a program.

Parents' Rights as Defined by PL94-142. Most important to the re-examination of the home-school relationship is the fact that the new federal laws regarding the education of minority group and handicapped children require the establishment of parent advisory committees (Burello and Sage, 1979). For example, under PL94-142 statutory guidelines (in the form of federal regulations) clearly set forth and define the character and extent of parent involvement. It has been this legislation which has contributed to establishing the foundation for the newly developing relationship between parents and educators.

Parents are protected against unilateral actions by the schools. Evaluations and placement decisions may not begin until the parents have offered their consent. Other safeguards provide for non-biased tests (through the use of more than one instrument), testing in the child's native language, and the collecting of relevant data addressing the child's adaptive behavior in school or at home. The data regarding the child's adaptive behavior at home needs to come from the families themselves and not some extraneous source. If dissatisfied, parents may challenge the school's evaluation and obtain a private evaluation. The parents can become active participants in the planning sessions and no longer need assume the helpless position of passive

recipients of information collected by others.

Parents and professionals jointly assume accountability for educational decisions made on behalf of the handicapped child. The due process clause of PL94-142 legislation calls for:

- parents' consent for an evaluation;

- parents' right to obtain a private evaluation of the youngster, if they choose;

- written notice from the school to the parents notifying them of any changes in the child's educational placement and the reasons for the change;

- parents' right to initiate a due process hearing to voice an objection or complaint about the identification, evaluation or placement of their child (Abeson and Zettel, 1977).

Such due process hearings serve as vehicle for bringing parents and professional together to discuss the education of children with handicapping conditions. Parents and professionals alike are provided with the opportunity to examine points of dissatisfaction in an objective and systematic way. These kinds of interactions, while uncomfortable at times, are likely to contribute further to the growing involvement of parents in the education of their

handicapped child.

Individual Education Plans. Another aspect of parent involvement is incorporated into the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP). The law requires that children with handicapping conditions receive an appropriate education, which is defined as occurring in the least restrictive setting. To establish the criteria for such a program, special meetings are held which must include one or both of the parents. Thus, the parent(s) participate in partnership with the professionals in developing an appropriate curriculum. Parents and members of the professional staff may indicate what they believe to be in the best interests of the child in question. In this way, the legal requirements have contributed to combining parents and professional in a joint effort, making it far more likely that the resulting IEP will represent a shared responsibility and response.

In special education, an important element in the success of parents and teachers working together on designing an Individual Education Plan for a child is their agreement on the child's educational abilities. To provide an effective education plan, it is reasonable to assume that both parent and teacher must know what the child is currently

able to do. If both agree that the child is capable of performing a specific task, they can plan activities beginning with that task. On the other hand, disagreement about existing skills might hamper the planning process, lead to an uncooperative effort, and perhaps result in an ineffective education plan. Teachers have been developing educational plans as part of their professional responsibilities and, therefore, are assumed to have knowledge about educational planning. If teachers are presumed to be informed about assessing children's skills and developing educational plans, the burden falls on the parents to demonstrate their ability to appraise realistically their child's abilities.

"Realism" is defined as the ability of parents to assess accurately their child's abilities, disabilities and developmental behavior. Studies of parents' perceptions of their handicapped child reveal that parents usually approximate closely the child's professionally assessed level of functioning when asked to estimate the developmental or mental age of their child (Rheingold, 1945; Kanner, 1953). Ewert and Green (1957) were the first to report an empirical study of parental realism. They asked 100 parents of retarded children to estimate the typical developmental age of their child's behavior. For example, if their child was

just beginning to walk, the parents were to give the age that a normally developing child would begin to walk. Their answers were converted into a developmental quotient and compared to the result of the child's score on an intelligence test. The parents rated 70% of the boys and 57% of the girls accurately, accuracy being defined as a difference of less than 15 points from the standardized test. The significance of the Ewert and Green study is that it was one of the first to test clinical knowledge by introducing an acceptable research methodology. Parents' ratings of their child's ability were charted on a standardized test and compared to the child's actual performance on that test. This technique provided a quantitative measure of the realism of parents' assessments of their handicapped children. Zuk (1957), Boles (1959) and Wolfensberger (1971), using similar techniques, also found that parents of handicapped children were quite realistic about their child's abilities. In subsequent studies, the judgements of the professionals were used as the objective and realistic standard against which to compare parent assessments. Although the question may be raised about the validity of using professional judgement as an objective base, it remains that parents accurately assess their child's current functioning.

Empirical studies of parents' perceptions of their

child's current abilities conclude that parents are realistic. These findings are encouraging for the success of parents and educators working together to develop an Individualized Education Plan for a child. It permits educators to share their knowledge of educational planning and parents to share their knowledge of their child's abilities.

### Dynamics and Influences on Parent-Educator Interactions

The dynamics and influences on parent-educator interaction will be represented in the following constituents: Negative Concerns, Development of Effective Relationships, Misconceptions, and Professionals Perceptions of Parent Involvement.

#### Negative Concerns. Marion, (1981) says,

In the past, working with parents was one of the teacher's least enjoyable tasks. This probably was due to the fact that teachers and parents tended to misplace the blame for the child's inability to learn. In these previous encounters the teacher might have felt that: 1. The parents blamed the teacher for the child's problem; 2. The parental indictment of the teacher's techniques and interaction styles was overly harsh; 3. The parents wasted precious teacher time in useless conversation. On the other hand, parents might have perceived that: 1. The teachers blamed the parents for the child's behavior; 2. The teachers were critical of parents who



attempted to interfere with their management of the classroom; 3. The teachers were annoyed by parents' involvement in advisory committees and/or school curriculum changes.

When these teacher-parent responses are viewed in the light of past relationships, concerns about developing effective parent-teacher interactions become clear. Barsch (1969) first recognized a paradox in the parent-teacher relationship and stated, "Most parents. . . regard their child's teacher as being well trained for the job. They automatically assign their child's teacher the prestige of 'specialist.' . . . This produces an interesting paradox. The teacher has been influenced to regard the parent negatively while the parent has been influenced to regard the teacher positively"(p.9). However, the situation has changed considerably. PL94-142 demands a partnership approach for parents and teacher. It makes clear that a sharing relationship must be established.

Development of Effective Relationships. Two sets of preconditions are identified for developing an effective parent-educator relationship: (1) Educators must believe that parents have a role in the educational process (Rutherford and Edgar, 1979) and (2) They must trust each other (Rutherford, 1979; Goodacre, 1970). parents believe they are a crucial component in their children's education (Buskin, 1975); progressive educators advocate it (Fantini,

1974; Scribner and Stevens, 1975); the federal government advocates and supports it (PL94-142); and researchers have published data to confirm its efficacy (Guralnick, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

Children learn better when parents and educators cooperate (Hymes, 1974; Green and Allen, 1968). Before parents and educators can cooperate, they must trust each other. The most effective educational process is that which occurs when parent and educator demonstrate mutual trust and respect and seek extensive cooperative working relations between home and school (Kelly, 1974). Working together increases the opportunities to see each other as individuals rather than stereotypes. Thinking about each other in stereotyped roles hinders knowing each other as individuals. These misconceptions may be related to the image projected by the person or to the way he/she is portrayed in literature and the mass media. The images affect expectations and interactions.

Misconceptions. The cultural image of educator represents society's views about the role and functions of the teacher in our particular social system. High character standards have been imposed on teachers from colonial days to the present. Expected to understand the complexities of life and

prepare children for responsible adulthood, teachers themselves are considered removed from "the ugly temptations and pleasures of mere mortals" (Lightfoot, 1978). Accordingly, Margaret Mead (1951) describes three images of the American teacher prevalent in the literature and mass media. The first is of the little red-school house teacher living in "the good ole days," when the teacher reflected all the high values of the society. It is a romanticized picture of better times. The teacher in it is almost always a woman.

The second image is of the teacher as imparter of the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Here she is seen as responsible for moving children from ignorance. An image of control and order is fostered. Again the teacher is seen as guardian of the children, living under the careful scrutiny of the community. The third image is of the teacher of impoverished immigrants and urban children. She represents the children's hope for the future as they learn the accepted values of society and become upwardly mobile. A common thread among the three images is that the teacher should be an all-giving, nurturant servant of the people inspiring hope for the social and economic well-being of her children. In short, she is the ideal, if sometimes punitive, mother.

The idealized "mother" is a woman who lives for her children (Rich, 1978). She functions as the primary socializing agent of the child. And soon the primary mother, the mother of origin, finds her work evaluated by her counterpart in the schools. How well has the mother prepared her children for learning (Lightfoot, 1978)? Students behavior in school is attributed to the child's home environment (Fantini, 1974; Goodacre, 1970). Some teachers blame mothers for children's school problems and want to rescue them (Jersild, 1955); some teachers need to feel loved by their students, while others need to feel powerful in relation to parents (Redl and Wattenberg, 1959). Whatever the case, it is a highly charged atmosphere in which two parties come together, one sensing her ability to mother judged according to her child's learning, the other sensing her teaching praised or condemned to the degree she (or he) accommodates an imposed idealized maternal role. Nonetheless, the law has given parents and teachers co-equal status and requires that they be allies in the education of the children.

#### Professionals Perceptions of Parent Involvement

Another important consideration for successful collaboration is how educators perceive this collaboration. If meeting with parents is seen as an extra responsibility

and a burden, educators are likely to approach working with parents with less than ideal enthusiasm. This potential negative attitude may, in turn, be supported by the ideological position of the professional organizations.

Teachers unions have officially approved the concepts of the new legislation (American Teacher, 1977) but educators, as represented by unions have reflected a negative view of the total educational package. They stress increased workloads and difficulties in classroom management (Shanker, 1977). Recently, job security and class size based on the number of handicapped children in a class have become bargaining issues for some union representatives (Gerwitz, 1978). This negative perspective on workload and responsibility may influence teachers' attitudes toward working with parents. While some teachers might feel overworked and resent the additional responsibility of working with parents, the federal regulations clearly require that teachers and parents be members of an educational planning team (PL94-142, sec. 121a345).

The review of the literature presented here has discussed the transition to the legal inclusion of parents of special needs children in their children's education and the dynamics of the issues of parents and educators working

together. The question of how receptive educators are to parent participation is dealt with in a study by Cohen (1977). She used a twelve (12) item questionnaire to survey teachers of students with handicapping conditions. The questionnaire sought to measure the extent to which professional educators were sympathetic to parent involvement in their children's education and the specific activities in which such participation would be most appropriate. The results indicate that teachers are generally supportive of parent involvement. However, they also indicate some reservations about the scope of this involvement. For example, teachers tended to favor parents supporting teachers and the educational process as well as acting in supportive roles with other parents. They did not advocate parents taking any active role in the actual classroom teaching process. While the study gives insight into the attitudes of special education teachers, the sample was comprised exclusively of teachers (no parents were surveyed) and the sample size was rather small (n=41). An additional concern is that the teachers supported the concept of parent participation, but the research did not determine whether the teachers implemented their beliefs.

Yoshida, et al (1978) surveyed 1500 planning team members in the State of Connecticut, inquiring about what

role(s) they believed parents should assume in the educational planning process. More than half responded that such participation should be confined to providing and gathering information about their child. A far smaller percentage of the respondents approved of parents reviewing the students' educational progress, assessing the appropriateness of the educational program, or participating in the educational decision-making process. As in the Cohen study, the sample did not include parents; thus, both of these studies provide us with insights from only half of the proposed partnership and no additional knowledge about whether they implemented this idea in their own practice.

Frequently, a great contrast exists between the idealized image of teacher and parent and the realities of the individual personalities working together. Both parents and educators are at the center of the child's socialization process. In the early years, the home, primarily the mother, is thought to be the dominant shaper and primary socializer of the child. Educators are an important force in determining the child's transition into the adult world. As parents become more involved in the schooling process, there is a need to clarify and articulate areas of educator competence and to make explicit the spheres in which parents should participate.

The parent-educator relationship is changing. Empirical studies of attitudes regarding parent participation in the educational process have been limited to professional perceptions, with little, if any, discussion of whether or not those beliefs have been implemented. Parents advocate participation (Buskin, 1975). The form of that participation is not clear. Parents and educators face the challenge to transform the concept of parent participation into actual practice. This study investigates the attitude of parents and educators toward the concept of parent participation, the form it may take, and the ways in which the process may be implemented effectively.



## C H A P T E R   I I I

### M E T H O D O L O G Y

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research population, measuring instrument and procedures used in the collection and treatment of the data.

The principal objective of the research presented here was to collect and analyze data to provide a better understanding of attitudes regarding parent participation in the educational process. The questions addressed by this investigation were:

1. What roles do educators and parents of special needs children believe parents should play in the educational process?
2. What roles do parents and educators believe parents' currently do play in the schools?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between the perceptions of roles parents should and do play in the educational process?
4. What activities do parents and educators believe would enhance the parent-educator relationship?
5. Which activities would parents and educators participate in, if made available?

### The Setting and Population

The setting for the study was an urban public school district in western Massachusetts, population 51,942 (1980 census). The pupil enrollment in the district for the 1980-1981 school year was approximately 10,000 students, 11% of whom were classified by the school as having special educational needs. A random sample of 25% of the parents of children who were enrolled in special education classes and all professional personnel in the special education department (teachers, administrators, school psychologists, and adjustment counselors) were requested to participate in the study.

Selection of the Sample. A random sampling approach was used so every parent might have an equal probability of being selected as part of the sample. Every fourth name was picked from the special education student roster. Gay (1976) states that random sampling is the best single way to obtain a representative sample. Although no technique may guarantee a representative sample, the probability is higher for randomizing than for any other procedure.

Determination of the Sample Size. Selltitz, Wrightsman, and Cook (1976) state that sampling involves a set of procedures that governs selecting a relatively small number of cases to

represent a larger number of cases. Dillman (1978), in further defining sample size, indicates "a sample cannot be representative of a population unless all members of that population have a known chance of being included in the sample." While there is general agreement about this principle, the actual size of the sample remains a matter of some controversy. Borg and Gall (1971) contend that the general rule for determining sample size is to use the largest sample possible. They argue:

The reason for this rule is that although we generally study only samples, we are really interested in learning about the population from which they are drawn. The larger the sample, the more likely are their means and standard deviations to be representative of the population means and standard deviations (p. 123).

Gay (1976) states that for descriptive research a sample size of 10% is a minimum.

This study surveyed 25% of the parents of the approximately 1100 students identified by the school as receiving special education services and all of the professional educational staff. The population receiving special education services ranged from children with mild handicapping conditions i.e. occasional speech therapy, to severe handicapping conditions i.e. residential placement. Three hundred seventy five (375) questionnaires were sent in the first mailing, 310 to parents and 65 to the staff. The

completed sample included 300 parents of children with special needs and 60 members of the professional staff.

### Data Collection Methods

The special education law requiring parent participation is new, and, as a result, there is relatively little information available on the attitudes of parents and educators toward policies and practices resultant of the legislation as a basic tool. To gather further information, a descriptive survey instrument was designed. The choice of instrument was predicated on the following rationale, articulated by Fox:

In educational research, there are two conditions which occurring together suggest and justify the descriptive survey. First, that there is an absence of information about a problem of educational significance, and second, that the situations which could generate that information do exist and are assessable to the researcher (p.424).

Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (1976) define descriptive research as a systematic collection of data from a specified population to determine its attitudes and/or behaviors. These authors indicate further that descriptive studies are not limited to any one method of data collection. Typically, descriptive data are collected through the use of an interview, a questionnaire, or observation. The selection of the particular means for collecting the data and the

accompanying research design need to be geared to minimizing the potential of introducing any systematic bias while maximizing the input of informative data. A survey by questionnaire was chosen as it permitted collection of data from a large sample and avoided the interpersonal bias of an interview. What follows is a review of some of the arguments which have been raised in assessing the relative merits of the different descriptive data gathering approaches -- observations, interviews, questionnaires.

Methods relying on observation are primarily directed toward describing and understanding behavior as it occurs. In both the interview and questionnaire approach, heavy reliance is placed on verbal reports from the subjects. The advantages of a questionnaire are that it can be administered simultaneously to large numbers of people, who can answer items with anonymity and without fear or embarrassment. Thus, the chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs or feelings are generally increased. Other benefits accrue: respondents' answers are not affected by the characteristics or biases of an interviewer, structured questions enable each respondent to receive the same set of questions phrased exactly the same way, resulting in a comparability in phrasing which can help to standardize the response (Dillman, 1978). Borg and Gall

(1971) point out that questionnaires provide greater uniformity across situations than do interviews and, therefore, the data they provide can be more easily analyzed.

Disadvantages of questionnaires include the fact that the information one obtains by using a questionnaire is limited to the written responses of subjects to prearranged questions (Selltiz, wrightsman and Cook, 1976, p.294). In contrast, in an interview, both interviewer and person interviewed are present and there is a greater opportunity for eliciting more indepth information. Other advantages of the interview are that the face-to-face interview yields a higher completion rate, allows for a longer and more complex questionnaire and provides immediate feedback. In addition, people may be more comfortable expressing their ideas orally than in writing (Dillman, 1978).

The choice of a questionnaire for this study was based on the size of the population to be surveyed. Questionnaires save a great deal of time otherwise spent in scheduling appointments, traveling, and interviewing. This approach also eliminates the subjectivity and possible bias of the interpersonal situation of the interview. Most importantly for this study, the questionnaire allows for anonymity while permitting the collection of data from a much larger sample.

Design of the Questionnaire. Percentage of returns is estimated to depend upon questionnaire length, question complexity, the importance of the study as determined by the respondent, and the extent to which the respondent believes his or her answers are important (Borg and Gall, 1971).

The questionnaire used for this study (see Appendix A) was comprised of the following:

- Part A. Perceptions of parent participation as it should exist.
- Part B. Perceptions of parent participation as it does exist.
- Part C. Perceived efficacy of selected school programs in facilitating parent-educator interaction.
- Part D. Listing of additional activities to facilitate parent-educator interaction.
- Part E. Ratings of willingness to participate in activities listed in Part C (above).
- Part F. Demographic Data.
- Part G. Open-ended section for any additional information about the parent-educator relationship.

The open-ended sections were included to provide

participants with an opportunity to express additional opinions not directly addressed in the structured items sections.

Parts A and B of the questionnaire employ a 4-point Likert-type scale. In Part A, subjects were asked what role they believe parents should play in the educational process. Respondents were directed to circle their level of agreement or disagreement regarding each of 14 statements concerning various degrees of parent involvement (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The four possible choices were chosen to force an agree or disagree response. In Part B, subjects were asked to estimate the degree to which parents are involved in the educational process (i.e., Always, Often, Sometimes, and Never).

The fourteen item questionnaire was adapted from a twelve item instrument designed by Cohen (1977). She developed the questionnaire to sample the attitudes of teachers of children with severely and multiply handicapping conditions. The twelve questions, which required a "yes or no" answer, sought to measure perceived support or non-support for parents' involvement in a range of "educational roles." More specifically, questions 1 and 2 addressed traditional home support for the school and



education in general; questions 3, 4 and 5 represented the educator as "knower" and the parent as "learner"; questions 6, 7 and 8 represented the parent in the role of teacher. The remaining questions reflected the concept of a partnership between parents and educators. From her findings, Cohen concluded that educators support several forms of parent participation. The form of parent participation least accepted by educators was parents working as teaching assistants. Her recommendations were to compare these findings with a larger sample of teachers public school programs for mildly and moderately handicapped children. She also suggested exploring the congruence between the acceptance of the idea of parent participation and actual implementation. Cohen does not present any reliability or validity data. Presumably, this follows Selltiz et al (1976) statement that instruments developed for the purpose of a single study make no attempts to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument.

To satisfy the needs of this study, the Cohen questionnaire was modified in the following ways. All twelve items were used but with slight modifications in phrasing. Two items were added. The first, item #10 "Parents should participate in making educational decisions about their children's programs." The focus is on the role of parents in

educational decision making, a major component of the federal law for the handicapped. The second, item #14 "Parents of special needs children should have their own organization in the school system." It relates to the power of parents to cause change in the educational process (as described in the review of the literature) and focuses on whether parents should belong to segregated parent groups.

To obtain the subjects' attitudinal beliefs, each item in Part A begins with the statement "parents should" and measures the extent of agreement or disagreement (i.e., Strongly Agree [SA], Agree [A], Disagree [D], Strongly Disagree [SD]). The same fourteen items were incorporated in Part B to obtain the respondents' perception of the extent to which the activity is currently practiced in the school system, allowing the following four alternatives (Always [A], Often [O], Sometimes [S] and Never [N]).

Part C lists a series of ten activities which the respondents were instructed to rate in terms of perceived helpfulness in improving the Parent-Educator relationship. Three alternatives were provided: none, little, much (helpfulness). The particular activity descriptions were derived from discussion with the Special Education Director in the public school. He was optimistic about the prospect

of introducing the activities deemed helpful by the respondents. Part D is comprised of three open-ended items inviting the respondents to add any other activities they believe would be effective. It also includes one "yes or no" item inquiring, "Does parent participation have an impact on educational decision making?"

Part E repeats the same ten activities as listed in Part C, inquiring whether the respondents "would participate" if the activities were made available. Subjects were instructed to choose one of three possible responses: yes, uncertain, or no. Part F requests demographic data, the sex and age of all the respondents. The data requested of the parents are: age of child/children, years in special education classes, primary handicapping condition (mild, moderate or severe) and sex of child/children. The data requested of the educators are: age of children with whom they work, years working in special education and primary handicapping condition of children with whom they work (mild, moderate, or severe). Part G is an open-ended section asking for relevant information about the parent-educator relationship and suggestions for improving the relationship. Its purpose is to provide the respondents with a means to communicate information not covered in the structured portion of the questionnaire.

Pilot Testing the Questionnaire. The questionnaire was pilot tested with three groups of people: eight (8) special educators at the University of Massachusetts; eight (8) educational researchers at both the University of Massachusetts and Empire State College, Albany, New York; and twenty-five (25) people (i.e., 10 educators and 15 parents) drawn from the population to be surveyed for the final study.

A cover letter accompanied the pre-testing phase of the questionnaire (see Appendix B), requesting that the respondents comment on the questionnaire and recommend any changes. The dual objective of the pilot effort was to obtain information that would both enhance the quality of the questionnaire and make it attractive enough to encourage people to answer it. In addition, the letter requested suggestions to make the instrument easily understood by parents and educators (of varying educational levels). The pilot was given to colleagues in the Special Education Department to critique the instrument in terms of the study's purposes. The eight (8) educational researchers provided indepth criticism about wording and layout. Finally, the pilot, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a letter of introduction from the Director of Special Education of the participating public school (See Appendix C), was

mailed to sample drawn from the population to be surveyed. The pilot uncovered problems in the phrasing of items and in question design. Suggestions for revisions and improvements were discussed at length with University colleagues. For the most part, the criticisms from the respondents in the mailed pilot matched the criticisms of the university personnel. According to critiques from the pilot groups, the questionnaire was revised. Directions for respondents were rewritten, phrasing of two statements were changed, and spacing was improved. The questionnaire was professionally printed and prepared for distribution.

#### Administration of the Survey

The cover letter (See Appendix D) and questionnaire (Appendix A) were mailed to 25% of the parents who have a child enrolled in special education classes and to all professional school personnel associated with the special education program. Stamped and addressed reply envelopes were provided along with a letter explaining the objective of the project and stressing all the questionnaires would be anonymous. The population was also informed that a brief summary of the results would be mailed to all persons in the sample. Respondents were invited to contact the investigator by collect phone call if they had questions regarding the

project. One week later a reminder postal card was mailed to the entire sample requesting those who did not return the questionnaire to do so (See Appendix E). After 4 weeks, another mailing, including the questionnaire, a letter containing a stronger request for response (See Appendix F), and a stamped, self-addressed envelope, went out to all persons on the original list.

Response Rate. The response rate is calculated as the percentage of contacts with eligible respondents that result in completed questionnaires. Dillman's (1978) formula allows for inclusion of non-eligible or non-reachable contacts as indicated below:

$$\text{Response rate} = \frac{\text{number returned}}{\text{number in sample} - \text{non-eligible} + \text{non-reachable}} \times 100$$

Three hundred seventy five (375) questionnaires were mailed, fifteen (15) were returned because of incorrect or unknown addresses and were not able to be corrected. Two hundred nine (209) respondents returned the questionnaire yielding a survey response rate of:

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{209}{375 - 15} \times 100 \\ &= 58 \text{ percent} \end{aligned}$$

Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (1978) state that "when questionnaires are mailed to a random sample the proportion of returns is usually low varying from about 10-50%." In terms of the response to this survey (above), given the randomness of the original sample, the response rate is satisfactory. The methodological validity was determined by the comparison of characteristics of respondents with characteristics of the original sample (Tables 1 and 2).

Characteristics of the Response Sample. A comparison of selected demographic characteristics (i.e., sex and age of child/children) was made between the original sample and those responding. These data are presented below.

Table 1

Comparison of Age of Child for Original Sample and Respondents

---

Group	<u>Age of Child</u>					Total
	3-5	6-9	10-13	14-18	19-22	
Original Sample	12	69	94	123	12	310
Respondents	12	49	53	55	6	175
Total	24	118	147	178	18	485

---

$\chi^2 = 6.689, df = 1, p < .20.$

Table 2  
 Comparison of Sex of Child for Original Sample and Respondents

Group	<u>Sex of Child</u>		Total
	Male Children	Female Children	
Original Sample	207	103	310
Respondents	93	56	149
Total	300	159	450

$\chi^2 = 0.907$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .50$ .

As the above two calculated Chi-Squares indicate, the characteristics of the subjects (i.e., age and sex of children) who returned the questionnaires were not significantly different from the characteristics of the initial random sample.

#### Analysis of the Results

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Program was used to analyze the results. The data were keypunched and the cards were programmed for the Control Data Corporation Cyber 170 Computer at the Computer Science Department in the Graduate Research Center of the University of Massachusetts for analysis. The survey findings are presented in the following manner:

--parents alone

--educators alone

--comparisons between parents and educators



A. Parent and Educator Responses to the Questionnaire. For each of the four major sections of the questionnaire (Part A. Roles parents should play, Part B. Roles parents do play, Part C. Helpfulness of activities, Part E. Willingness to participate in activities), parent and educator responses are analyzed and presented separately. For each of these four sections a general statement about the response trend opens the discussion followed by a presentation of the items receiving the highest and, then, lowest rankings. For Part A. (items relating to roles parents should play in the educational process) the rankings are based on the percent of "strongly agree" responses and in the case of a tie, "agree," responses are also compared. For Part B. (items relating to roles parents do play in the educational process), the rankings are based on the percent of "always" responses and, in the case of a tie, "often," responses are compared. For Part C. (helpful activities) rankings are based on the percent of "much" and, in the case of a tie, "little," responses are compared. For Part E. (willingness to participate) rankings are based on the percent "yes" and, in the case of a tie, "uncertain," responses are compared.

B. A Comparison of Individual Parent and Educator Beliefs about the Roles Parents Should and Do play in the Educational Process. The subject's responses to Part A. of the

questionnaire may be identified as a normative belief, an opinion about how things ought to be. In contrast, the subject's responses to Part B. of the questionnaire may be identified as a cognitive reaction, an estimate about how things really are. Clearly, our preference for how things ought to be are not necessarily in concordance with the way we believe they are. When the two beliefs are consonant with each other, a state of congruence exists; when the two beliefs are not consonant with each other, a state of incongruity exists (Festinger, 1957). Two kinds of analyses were undertaken. Initially, the subjects' ratings on the two Parts are presented, ranked, and a rank order correlation performed to obtain a measure of association in the rankings of the two groups.

Secondly, to undertake a more specific analysis of congruence, response alternatives are grouped in the following way:

"Strongly Agree" and "Agree" = positive normative.

"Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" = negative normative.

"Always" and "Often" = positive cognitive.

"Sometimes" and "Never" = negative cognitive.

The rationale for grouping the response alternatives in this

particular way derives from the inherent content validity of the choices and for computational convenience. It seems reasonable to assume that the concepts of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" possess some logical connection to each other, similar to the association between the concepts of "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree." Similarly, there is a logical association in one's reality testing processes that would tend to group "Always" and "Often" and "Sometimes" and "Never" together. The computational convenience allows for the analyses to be undertaken on a 4 cell rather than 16 cell contingency table.

Carrying forward the definition of congruence and incongruence presented above, a subjects response to an item on Part A (should) and Part B (do) would be congruent if both were positive (i.e., strongly agree/agree and always/often) or both were negative (disagree/strongly disagree and sometimes/never) and incongruent if one was positive and the other negative (i.e., strongly agree/agree and sometimes/never or disagree/strongly disagree and always/often). These comparisons are presented in Figure 1.

SHOULD RESPONSES	DO RESPONSES		<sup>a</sup> %	
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	Total	Congruent
Strongly Agree/ Agree	N=100 A	N=0 B	N=100	N=100
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	N=50 C	N=50 D	N=100	50
Total	N=150	N=50	N=200	75

Figure 1. Illustration of table of analysis of congruence.

a) Cells A and D are instances of congruence, Cells B and C are instance of incongruence.

Each of the 14 items were analyzed separately to determine the relative degree of congruence between subjects' perceptions of what should be (normative beliefs reflected in Part A) and what is (cognitive beliefs reflected in Part B). Two distinct questions may be addressed with this scheme;

1. is congruence or incongruence more likely?
2. where does the congruence or incongruence originate?

In the hypothetical example presented above, 200 subjects have responded to the particular item. Of this number, 150 gave congruent responses (i.e., sum of cells A and D) and 50 gave incongruent responses. Of the 150 congruent pairs of responses i.e., 100 originated in Cell A, respondents who believed that what should be - is vs. only 50

which originated in Cell D, i.e., respondents who believed that what should not be - is not. On the other hand, of the 50 incongruent responses, all originated from subjects who believed that what should not be - is. In addition, the table indicated 100% of the positively rated normative respondents were congruent ( $\frac{A}{A+B}$ ), whereas, only 50% of the negatively rated normative responses were congruent, ( $\frac{C}{C+D}$ ). To summarize the data for this particular item, 75% of the subjects (150/200) gave congruent responses, two-thirds of which (100/150) stem from positive normative beliefs being estimated to be a reality (Cell A); whereas all of the 50 incongruent responses stem from negative normative beliefs which are estimated to be a reality (Cell C).

C. Comparison of Congruent Responses for Parents vs. Educators. The congruence coefficients for each of the 14 items for parents and educators were compared and analyzed, using the chi-square statistic as a test of significance.

D. Frequency counts and percentages for Parts D, F and G. Part D of the questionnaire consists of two sections, the first requests respondents list three activities they believe would enhance the parent-school relationship. Each individual response was independently coded by three judges and placed in one of four categories. The categories are:

1. Recommendations to change or add specific educational activities, i.e., a) workshops for parents and teachers, b) teach academic activities to parents to enable them to work with their child.
2. Requests for counseling sessions or direct communication, i.e., a) frequent conferences, b) counseling sessions for parents and teachers.
3. Recommendations for general political or policy change, i.e., a) time for joint parent, teacher and child activities, b) less crowded classrooms.
4. Suggestions to increase visits to home and school and additional social activities i.e., a) home visits by teachers b) parents visit classes in progress c) socials with parent, teacher and child.

The second section of Part D asks the question "does parent participation have an impact on educational decision making. The "yes", "no", "maybe" responses are totaled.

Part F, demographic data of respondents is presented in Table 4 of Chapter IV.

Part G is an open-ended section requesting relevant information about and suggestions for improving the parent-educator relationship. The responses were assigned to

one of five categories. The five categories were agreed upon by three judges and the responses were independently coded. Consensus on coded items was reached after a meeting to discuss individual differences. The five categories are:

1. Target of problem is parent.
2. Target of problem is teacher.
3. Target of problem is school/system/program.
4. No problem - constructive suggestion presented.
5. Satisfaction with present program.

A frequency count of responses of Parts D, F and G is provided in Chapter IV.

The procedures for organizing the findings of the survey are designed to provide a further understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of the parent-educator relationship, focusing on parents perceptions of what they believe they should be doing and are doing and contrasting these data with the perceptions of educators.

by three judges and the responses were independently coded. Consensus on coded items was reached after a meeting to discuss individual differences. The five categories are:

1. Target of problem is parent.
2. Target of problem is teacher.
3. Target of problem is school/system/program.
4. No problem - constructive suggestion presented.
5. Satisfaction with present program.

A frequency count of responses of Parts D, F and G is provided in Chapter IV.

The procedures for organizing the findings of the survey are designed to provide a further understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of the parent-educator relationship, focusing on parents perceptions of what they believe they should be doing and are doing and contrasting these data with the perceptions of educators.



## C H A P T E R I V

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

This chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the data resulting from responses of 209 parents and teachers of children with special educational needs to a survey questionnaire which examined their beliefs and perceptions about parent participation in the educational process.

The population surveyed was a random sample of parents of children enrolled in special education classes and all professional personnel in the special education program in an urban public school.

Resulting data were submitted to the computer center at the University of Massachusetts and were statistically treated by using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) computer program. The statistical procedures used were: a) frequencies, b) percentages, c) rank order correlations and d) coefficients of congruence.

#### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Table 3 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample. These data are presented in the same format as found in Part F of the original questionnaire.

Table 3

## Respondents' Demographic Data

Group	N		Sex		Age Statistics	
	N	Percent	Sex	N	Percent	Age Statistics
Parent	152	73	Male	49	27	Range = 22-63 years
Educator	50	24	Female	117	66	Average = 39
Parent/Educator	7	3	Couple	11	6	
Total	209	100	Total	177	100	

PARENT SECTION	1. Age Of Child		2. Years In Special Education		3. Severity Of Handicap				
	Age Range	N	Percent	Years	N	Percent	Level	N	Percent
	3-5	12	4	1-2	48	31	Mild	80	52
	6-9	69	22	3-4	49	32	Moderate	51	34
	10-13	94	30	5-6	23	15	Severe	21	14
	14-18	123	40	7-8	17	11	Combination	10	19
	Above 18	12	4	9+	18	11			

Table 3 (Cont.)  
 Respondents Demographic Data<sup>a</sup>

EDUCATOR SECTION							
Age Of Children		Years Working In Special Education	Severity Of Handicap				
Age Range	N	Percent	Statistics	Level	N	Percent	
3-5	2	3	Range = 1 - 25	Mild	14	26	
6-9	5	9	Mean = 7.8	Moderate	20	38	
10-13	12	21	Median = 6.9	Severe	9	17	
14-18	16	29	Mode = 3.0	Combination	10	19	
Mixed Age	21	38					

<sup>a</sup> Unequal numbers due to missing data

Parent Responses to the Questionnaire

Parent Beliefs about the Roles Parents SHOULD PLAY in the Education Process. Table 4 summarizes parent responses to Part A of the questionnaire. The results indicate rather strong agreement with the 14 parental roles described, 76% either strongly agree or agree responses. The four particular items which received the highest ratings were #9 (strongly agree = 52%), #4 (strongly agree = 52%, #10 (strongly agree = 52%) and #2 (strongly agree = 49%). When both positive response alternatives are combined (i.e., strongly agree and agree), the magnitude of the respondents' agreement becomes even more conspicuous. On these four items, 97% or more of the responses were rated in this way. All four of the items share in common a focus on the individual child's educational program in terms of activities such as meetings with teachers, receiving suggestions from teachers, participating in educational decision making about the child and educationally stimulating the child.

For three of the fourteen items, responses indicating disagreement exceeded 50%. The three items are #8 (84% strongly disagree and disagree), #7 (62% strongly disagree and disagree) and #13 (57% strongly disagree and disagree). Each of these activities share in common a focus on direct

Table 4  
Parent Beliefs About Roles Parents Should Play In The  
Educational Process

Item	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>				RANK
		SA	AG	DA	SD	
1. encourage children to do what the teacher says	141	47	51	2	0	5
2. take children on trips, read to them and explain things	140	49	50	1	0	4
3. attend workshops run by the schools	140	17	64	17	2	9
4. meet with the teacher to get suggestions	140	52	47	1	0	2
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	139	17	45	34	4	10
6. serve as homework helpers	139	32	52	15	1	6
7. teaching assistants in other classes	136	6	32	58	4	13
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	138	2	14	62	22	14
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	141	52	47	1	0	1
10. participate in educational decision making	141	52	45	3	0	3
11. invited to serve on committees	139	24	65	10	1	8
12. welcome and give support to new parents	139	27	65	8	0	7
13. trainers of other parents	138	9	34	54	3	12
14. have own organization	138	17	48	31	4	11

<sup>a</sup> SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD=strongly disagree

teaching, either in the classroom or at home.

Parent Beliefs about the Roles Parents DO PLAY in the Educational Process. Table 5 presents a summary of parent responses to Part B of the questionnaire. Parents, in estimating the frequency of occurrence of the fourteen roles, divided their responses approximately equally between "positive" (i.e., always or often) and "negative" (i.e., sometimes or never) alternatives. The always/often response categories were selected about 45% of the time and the sometimes/never categories about 55%. This distribution is in rather sharp contrast to the results described for Part A of the questionnaire, a disparity to be discussed in greater detail below.

A ranking of all the items revealed that #1 was the role which was perceived as occurring most frequently (Always = 52% and always/often = 83%). Three other items clustered together: #10, #4 and #2, each of which were rated as occurring always/often more than 70%.

The four lowest rated items, which received sometimes/never ratings in excess of 70%, were #8, #7, #13, and #5. All the ranking are portrayed in Table 5.

Table 5  
 Parent Beliefs About The Roles Parents Do Play  
 In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>				RANK
		AL	OF	ST	NV	
1. encourage children to do what the teacher says	140	52	31	17	0	1
2. take children on trip, read to them, and explain things	138	33	44	23	0	4
3. attend workshop run by the schools	137	10	22	58	10	10
4. meet with teacher to get suggestions	138	36	36	27	1	3
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	137	9	15	44	32	11
6. serve as homework helpers	135	31	32	34	3	5
7. teaching assistants in other classes	134	4	12	48	36	13
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	135	4	5	32	59	14
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	135	29	43	27	1	6
10. participate in educational decision making	138	38	35	23	4	2
11. invited to serve on committees	135	19	19	39	23	9
12. welcome and give support to new parents	133	20	20	35	25	8
13. trainers of other parents	134	8	7	42	43	12
14. have own organization	130	21	14	28	37	7

<sup>a</sup> AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never

Parent Responses to Parts A and B of the Questionnaire. A comparison of parent responses to the roles they believe they should and do play is presented in Table 6, along with a ranking of the fourteen items. A rank order correlation was computed ( $r=.91$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The significant and high order magnitude correlation indicates a very strong degree of association between the order the parents rank the roles they believe they should play and the roles they do play.

Chi-square statistics were also calculated for each of the items and are presented in the table. All the items except #9 were found to have a significant chi-square. An examination of the response distribution clearly reveals that these significant statistics are the product of a consistent trend in which parents rated the roles they should play more positively than the roles they do play (recognizing that in the first instance they are rating levels of agreement and in the second instance they are rating estimates of frequency).

Parent Beliefs about the HELPFULNESS of Proposed Activities to Improve the Parent-Educator Relationship. Table 7 presents a summary of parent perceptions of the relative helpfulness of 10 proposed activities. Individual conferences on the child's progress was clearly rated as the most helpful (much = 89%). Other activities which stressed



Table 6  
 A Comparison Of Parent Beliefs About The Roles Parents  
 Should And Do Play In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent Should Responses <sup>a</sup>				Percent Do Responses <sup>b</sup>				Statistics				
		SA	AG	DA	SD	RANK	AL	OF	ST	NV	RANK	CHI-SQ	DF	SIG
1. encourage children to do what teacher says	140	47	51	2	0	5	52	31	17	0	1	28.892	4	.001
2. take children on trips, read to them	138	49	50	1	0	4	33	44	23	0	4	22.427	4	.001
3. attend workshops run by the school	136	17	63	18	2	9	10	22	58	10	10	22.795	9	.007
4. meet with teacher to get suggestions	137	52	47	1	0	1	36	36	27	1	3	18.133	6	.006
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	136	17	45	34	4	11	9	15	44	52	11	20.391	9	.016
6. serve as homework helpers	134	32	52	14	2	6	31	32	34	3	5	52.150	9	.001
7. teaching assistants in other classes	131	5	32	59	4	13	4	12	47	37	13	32.637	9	.001

<sup>a</sup>SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD=strongly disagree  
<sup>b</sup>AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never

Table 6 (Cont.)  
 A Comparison Of Parent Beliefs About The Roles Parents  
 Should And Do Play In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent Should Responses <sup>a</sup>				Percent Do Responses <sup>b</sup>				Statistics				
		SA	AG	DA	SD	RANK	AL	OF	ST	NV	RANK	CHI-SQ	DF	SIG
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	132	2	13	63	22	14	4	5	32	59	14	46.157	9	.001
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	135	52	47	1	0	3	29	43	27	1	6	7.252	6	.298
10. participate in mak- ing decisions	138	52	44	4	0	2	38	35	23	4	2	39.390	6	.001
11. invited to serve on committees	134	25	64	10	1	8	19	19	39	23	9	21.053	9	.012
12. welcome and give support to new parents	133	27	66	7	0	7	20	20	35	25	8	24.926	6	.001
13. trainers of other parents	132	9	36	52	3	12	8	6	43	43	12	34.886	9	.001
14. have own organiza- tion in school	128	17	50	29	4	10	21	14	27	38	7	29.125	9	.001

<sup>a</sup> SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD=strongly disagree

<sup>b</sup> AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never

direct services to help parents with their children tended to receive the higher ratings, e.g., items #1, #10, #2, and #8.

#### Parent WILLINGNESS to Participate in Proposed Activities.

Table 8 presents a summary of parent responses to Part E of the questionnaire. The rank ordering revealed that parents were most willing to participate in conferences on their child's progress, 91% indicating that they would. Very little support was demonstrated for participating in seminars on how schools work (yes = 29%) and for participating on school committees (yes = 34%).

#### Educator Responses to the Questionnaire

Educators Beliefs about the Roles Parents SHOULD PLAY in the Educational Process. Table 9 presents a summary of the educator responses to Part A of the questionnaire. Educators generally agreed with the 14 roles parents should play, 87% of all responses being strongly agree/agree. Item #2 received a particularly high rating, 84% strongly agree and 100% strongly agree/agree. However, six other items were also highly rated, with strongly agree/agree ratings exceeding 95%. The items are: #9, #4, #10, #11, #12, and #3.

On the negative side, items #7 and #8 (both relating to parents working in the classroom) received the lowest ratings, 34% and 75% strongly disagree/disagree, respect-

Table 7  
 Parent Estimates Of The Degree Of Helpfulness  
 Of The Proposed Activities

Item	N	Percent			RANK
		NONE	LITTLE	MUCH	
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	110	0	21	79	2
2. Child development courses.	109	3	30	67	4
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	110	6	36	58	6
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	110	1	10	89	1
5. Educators and parents on school committees.	110	6	46	48	7
6. Seminar on how schools work.	110	15	53	33	10
7. School-parent newsletter.	110	8	45	46	8
8. Counseling sessions for parents/teachers.	110	3	30	67	4
9. Home visits	108	13	46	41	9
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities	108	1	23	76	3

Table 8  
 Parent Willingness To Participate  
 In The Proposed Activities

Item	N	Percent			RANK
		YES	NO	?	
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	106	69	7	24	2
2. Child development courses.	104	49	19	32	6
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	103	52	18	29	5
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	105	91	2	7	1
5. Educators and parents on school policy committees.	103	34	13	53	9
6. Seminar on how schools work.	104	29	25	46	10
7. School-parent newsletter.	104	42	18	39	8
8. Counseling sessions for parents and teachers.	105	67	5	29	3
9. Home visits	106	49	21	30	7
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities	104	60	9	32	4

Table 9  
 Educator Beliefs About The Roles Parents Should  
 Play In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>				RANK
		SA	AG	DA	SD	
1. encourage children to do what the teacher says	49	31	65	4	0	9
2. take children on trips, read to them and explain things	50	84	16	0	0	1
3. attend workshops run by the schools	46	39	57	2	2	7
4. meet with the teacher to get suggestions	50	66	32	2	0	3
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	48	31	63	6	0	10
6. serve as homework helpers	49	18	59	23	0	12
7. teaching assistants in other classes	47	15	51	34	0	13
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	48	4	21	23	52	14
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	50	70	30	0	0	2
10. participate in educational decision making	50	58	40	2	0	4
11. invited to serve on committees	49	57	39	4	0	5
12. welcome and give support to new parents	50	48	48	4	0	6
13. trainers of other parents	50	20	68	8	4	11
14. have own organization	48	35	50	11	4	8

<sup>a</sup> SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD=strongly disagree

ively.

Educator Beliefs about the Roles Parents DO PLAY in the Educational Process. The responses of educators to Part B of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 10. Educators rated the fourteen roles as occurring less frequently than did the parents, selecting the sometimes/never alternative 31% of the time (in contrast to the parents' estimate of 45%). Rated as occurring most frequently were items #10, #11, #14, and #1. Item #8 was singled out by 57% of the educators, as never occurring, while items #7, #13, #5, and #3 were also rated as occurring infrequently, i.e., sometimes/never in excess of 80%.

Educator Responses to Parts A and B of the Questionnaire. A comparison of educator responses to Parts A and B of the questionnaire are presented in Table 11. A rank order correlation was computed ( $r=.63$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p < .02$ ). While the correlation is significant, the degree of association in the ranking of the roles parents should play and do play is substantially less than indicated for the parent ratings.

Moreover, the chi-square statistics for the individual items comparisons indicated that only three of the fourteen were significant, items #4, #7, and #8. An examination of

Table 10  
Educator Beliefs About The Roles Parents Do Play  
In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>				RANK
		AL	OF	ST	NV	
1. encourage children to do what the teacher says	49	14	47	39	0	4
2. take children on trip, read to them, and explain things	49	4	31	61	4	8
3. attend workshop run by the schools	48	2	15	75	8	12
4. meet with teacher to get suggestions	49	6	22	72	0	6
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	49	4	12	65	19	10
6. serve as homework helpers	49	4	21	71	4	9
7. teaching assistants in other classes	48	2	6	61	31	13
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	46	0	4	39	57	14
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	49	6	35	59	0	5
10. participate in educational decision making	49	28	39	33	0	1
11. invited to serve on committees	47	21	32	41	6	2
12. welcome and give support to new parents	47	6	17	49	28	7
13. trainers of other parents	46	4	11	39	46	11
14. have own organization	43	21	25	35	19	3

<sup>a</sup> AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never



Table 11

A Comparison of Educator Beliefs About The Roles Parents Should And Do Play In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent Should Responses <sup>a</sup>				Percent Do Responses <sup>b</sup>				Statistics				
		SA	AG	DA	SD	RANK	AL	OF	ST	NV	RANK	CHI-SQ	DF	SIG
1. encourage children to do what teacher says	48	31	65	4	0	9	14	47	39	0	4	3.461	4	.484
2. take children on trips, read to them	49	84	16	0	0	1	4	31	61	4	8	2.151	3	.542
3. attend workshops run by the school	45	40	56	2	2	7	2	13	76	9	12	3.928	9	.916
4. meet with teacher to get suggestions	49	67	31	2	0	3	6	22	72	0	6	16.409	4	.003
5. trained by teacher in home-training techniques	47	32	62	6	0	10	4	13	66	17	10	5.816	6	.444
6. serve as homework helpers	48	19	58	23	0	12	4	19	73	4	9	4.414	6	.621
7. teaching assistants in other classes	45	16	51	33	0	13	2	7	62	29	13	13.271	6	.039

<sup>a</sup>SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD=strongly disagree  
<sup>b</sup>AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never

Table 11 (Cont.)  
 A Comparison Of Educator Beliefs About The Roles Parents  
 Should And Do Play In The Educational Process

Item	N	Percent Should Responses <sup>a</sup>					Percent Do Responses <sup>b</sup>					Statistics		
		SA	AG	DA	SD	RANK	AL	OF	ST	NV	RANK	CHI-SQ	DF	SIG
8. teaching assistants in child's classroom	45	4	20	20	56	14	0	4	38	58	14	28.763	6	.001
9. meet with teacher to exchange ideas	49	69	31	0	0	2	6	35	59	0	5	1.973	2	.373
10. participate in mak- ing decisions	49	54	39	2	0	4	28	39	33	0	1	2.921	4	.571
11. invited to serve on committees	46	61	37	2	0	5	22	30	41	7	2	6.099	6	.412
12. welsome and give support to new parents	47	49	47	4	0	6	6	17	49	28	7	5.025	6	.541
13. trainers of other parents	46	20	69	7	4	11	4	11	39	46	11	12.134	9	.206
14. have own organiza- tion in school	41	39	49	7	5	8	22	24	34	20	3	10.623	9	.302

<sup>a</sup> SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; DA=disagree; SD+strongly disagree

<sup>b</sup> AL=always; OF=often; ST=sometimes; NV=never

the distribution of the response alternative indicates that educators estimated the frequency of occurrence of these roles to be considerably less frequent than would have been expected from the normative (Part A) ratings of roles parents should play.

Discrepancies between ratings of roles parents should play and estimates of roles they do play will be discussed in considerable detail below.

Educator Beliefs about the HELPFULNESS of Proposed Activities to Improve the Parent-Educator Relationship. The results of educator ratings of the helpfulness of the ten proposed activities are presented in Table 12. Activity #4 received by far the highest rating (much = 89%) and item #7 the lowest rating (much = 42%). A total of 7 of the 10 activities received rating of much above 50%.

Educator WILLINGNESS to Participate in the Proposed Activities. Educator responses to Part E of the questionnaire are found in Table 13. As a group, educators seemed quite willing to participate in the activities, 67% of all responses being "yes." Item #4, again, was rated most favorably. Nearly 90% of the educators indicated that they would participate in individual conferences on the child's

Table 12

Educator Estimates Of The Degree of Helpfulness  
Of The Proposed Activities

Item	N	Percent			RANK
		NONE	LITTLE	MUCH	
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	45	2	24	73	3
2. Child development courses.	45	7	31	62	6
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	44	9	36	55	7
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	45	0	11	89	1
5. Educators and parents on school committees.	45	2	51	47	8
6. Seminar on how schools work.	45	13	40	47	9
7. School-parent newsletter.	45	13	44	42	10
8. Counseling sessions for parents/teachers.	45	2	24	73	3
9. Home visits	45	0	22	78	2
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities	45	9	24	67	5

Table 13  
 Educator Willingness To Participate  
 In The Proposed Activities

Item	N	Percent			RANK
		YES	NO	?	
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	46	78	4	17	5
2. Child development courses.	47	51	17	32	7
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	46	63	7	30	6
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	46	89	4	7	1
5. Educators and parents on school policy committees.	46	52	13	35	8
6. Seminar on how schools work.	48	48	17	35	9
7. School-parent newsletter.	46	44	28	23	10
8. Counseling sessions for parents and teachers.	47	85	9	6	2
9. Home visits	47	83	6	11	3
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities	46	80	7	13	4

progress. Only items #6 and #7 received ratings of less than 50%.

### Measuring the Coefficient of Congruence

For each of the 14 defined parent roles, a separate analysis was undertaken to compare parent perceptions, and then educator perceptions of roles parents should and do play. The degree of similarity between the two has been described previously as a measure of congruence; whereas, the extent of dissimilarity between the two is identified as a measure of incongruence. The Tables contain the following data for each of the items:

1. the number of subjects who indicated a positive normative response (strongly agree/agree) and a positive cognitive response (always/often). These are congruent response pairs.
2. the number of subjects who indicated a positive normative response and a negative cognitive response (sometimes/never). These are incongruent response pairs.
3. the percent of congruent responses for subjects indicating a positive normative response (the two options immediately above).
4. the number of subjects who indicated a negative normative response (disagree/strongly disagree) and a positive cognitive response. These are incongruent response pairs.
5. the number of subjects who indicated a negative normative

response and a negative cognitive response. These are congruent response pairs.

6. the percent of congruent responses for subjects who indicated a negative normative response (the two options immediately above).

7. the total percent of congruent responses.

8. the rank order of the total percent of congruent responses (1-14).

#### Measuring the Congruence of Parent Responses

Congruence Analysis for Items 1-14. Overall, 68% of all response pairs were congruent. Whereas only 59% of normative positive responses were paired with congruent cognitive options (i.e., strongly agree/agree paired with always/often) 94% of normative negative responses were paired with congruent estimates (i.e., disagree/strongly disagree paired with sometimes/never). In only a very few instances did parents believe that they should not play a given role but estimated that it was a role they do play (incongruently paired responses = 6%). On the other hand, a substantial number of response pairs followed the pattern of positive norms and negative cognition, i.e., parents should play a given role but do not (incongruently paired responses = 41%). (See Table 14).

Table 14

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 1-14

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	855	584	59
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	27	418	94
Total			68



Congruence Analysis for Item #1: Encourage children to do what the teacher says. Table 15 reveals a relatively high congruence index of 82%. Only three of the responses to this item were in the negative normative category, the remaining indicating positive agreement. Of these, 83% were congruent, i.e., parents believed that this was a role they should and do play. (See Table 15).

Congruence Analysis for Item #2: Take children on trips, read to them and explain things. The response pattern to item #2 is quite similar to that observed for item #1. There is a relatively high degree of congruence, i.e., 78% and very few (n=2) responses in the negative normative category. In regard to this item, too, parents tend to believe that this is a role they should and generally do play in the educational process. (See Table 16).

Congruence Analysis for Item #3: Attend workshops run by the schools. Table 17 reveals a congruence percentage of 47% as among the lowest for all the 14 items (rank = 12). Whereas parents who rated this item as normatively negative tended to have congruent responses (89%). Only 37% of the parents who believed this is a role they should play also believed it is a role they do play. Further, the data indicated that this is a role that parents perceive as occurring relatively

Table 15

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 1

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	114	23	83
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	2	1	33
Total			82 (rank=2)

Table 16

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 2

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	106	30	78
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	2	100
Total			78 (rank=3)

Table 17

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 3

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	40	69	37
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	24	89
Total			47 (rank=12)

infrequently regardless of their normative ratings.

Congruence Analysis for Item #4: Meet with the teacher to get suggestions. The response pattern for item #4 is rather similar to that observed for items #1 and #2, a relatively high congruence percentage for the positively rated normative responses and relatively few negatively rated normative responses. Parents tend to believe that this is a role they should and do play. (See Table 18).

Congruence Analysis for Item #5: Trained by teacher in home-training techniques. Here the response pattern is similar to item #3. A large number of parents believed that this is a role they should play (total n=84), yet, only 36% estimated it as one which occurs often or always. In contrast, those parents who rated the item normatively negative (strongly disagree or disagree) had a substantially higher congruence coefficient, i.e., 94%. The results suggest parents do not believe they should play this role and they do not. (See Table 19).

Congruence Analysis for Item #6: Serve as homework helpers. The congruence percentage for responses to item #6 was relatively high (75% and rank = 4), with both positive and negative normative responses being rated this way (positive =

Table 18

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 4

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	98	38	72
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	0	0
Total			72 (rank=7)

Table 19

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 5

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	30	54	36
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	49	94
Total			58 (rank=11)

73% and negative = 86%). Thus, while parents may differ in their beliefs about whether this is a role they should or should not play, there is a general congruence for each. (See Table 20).

Congruence Analysis for Item #7: Teaching assistants in other classes. The majority of parents rated this item as normatively negative, and, of those, 96% indicated a congruent frequency estimate. In contrast, only 37% of the parents who rated this item as normatively positive had congruent cognitive estimates. This is a role that parents estimated they play infrequently and 96% of those respondents who believed they should not chose congruent responses. (See Table 21).

Congruence Analysis for Item #8: Teaching assistants in child's classroom. This item obtained the highest overall congruence ranking with an overall percentage of 89%. As in the case of the previous item (#7), it is the parents who selected the normatively negative alternatives (strongly disagree/agree) who comprise the overwhelming majority of the congruent total (i.e., 97%). Thus, the bulk of parents believe that this is a role they should not and do not play, with only 45% believing it is a role they should and do play.

Congruence Analysis for Item #9: Meet with teacher to



Table 20

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 6

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	82	31	73
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	18	86
Total			75 (rank=4)

Table 21

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 7

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	18	31	37
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	79	96
Total			74 (rank=6)

Table 22

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 8

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	9	11	45
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	109	97
Total			89 (rank=1)

exchange ideas. All but one of the respondents rated this item as normatively positive. Congruent responses accounted for 71% of all the responses, yielding a ranking of 8 among the 14 items. More than 70% of the parents indicated this is a role they should and do play. (See Table 23).

Congruence Analysis for Item #10: Participate in educational decision making. Again, only a small number of parents chose the normatively negative response (n=5). Of the remaining subjects, 75% chose congruent responses, indicating that parents estimate that they participate and believe they should participate in educational decision making. (See Table 24).

Congruence Analysis for Item #11: Invited to serve on committees. Parents choosing the negative norm (strongly disagree/disagree) obtained a substantially higher congruence percentage than did the parents who chose a positive normat response (37% vs. 42%). This is a role parents generally estimate occurs relatively infrequently, yet 50 responses indicated that it is a role parents should play, resulting in a congruence percentage of only 42% (50/119). (See Table 25).

Congruence Analysis for Item #12: Welcome and give support to new parents. The response pattern to this item is quite

Table 23

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item # 9

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	96	38	72
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	0	0
Total			71 (rank=8)

Table 24

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 10

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	100	33	75
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	4	80
Total			75 (rank=4)

Table 25

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
For Item #11

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	50	69	42
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	2	13	87
Total			47 (rank=12)

similar to that described for the previous one with only minimal differences in the frequencies and percentages. A greater number of parents selected the positive norm responses for this item compared to the previous one, yet the congruence percentage was comparable, yielding an overall rate of 47%. Only 43% of the parents indicated this is a role they should and do play, and 57% indicated it is a role they should and do not play. (See Table 26).

Congruence Analysis for Item #13: Trainers of other parents.

The overwhelming majority of parents view this role as one which parents should not and do not play, resulting in a congruence percentage of 97%. However, there remain a significant number of parents (n=59) who rated the item normatively positive, i.e., as a role parents should play. Yet, of those who rated in this way, only 27% also estimated it as a role which parents do play. (See Table 27).

Congruence Analysis for Item #14: Parents have own organization.

The overall 64% congruence coefficient resulted in a ranking of 10. The parents who rated the item as normatively positive achieved a congruence percentage of only 50% in contrast to the 93% for the negative norm responses. Thus, parents who recognize this role as one which they should not play were far more likely to estimate



Table 26

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 12

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	53	71	43
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	9	100
Total			47 (rank=12)

Table 27

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 13

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	16	43	27
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	2	71	97
Total			66 (rank=9)

Table 28

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
 Of Should and Do Responses By Parents  
 For Item # 14

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	43	43	50
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	39	93
Total			64 (rank=10)

its occurrence congruently than parents who rated the role as one they should play. (See Table 28).

### Measuring the Congruence of Educator Responses

Congruence Analysis for Items 1-14. Of the total number of 654 response pairs, educators rated only 42% congruent, the overwhelming bulk of these being negative norm responses. Whereas only 35% of the positive norm responses were congruent (198 of 572), 90% of the negative norm responses were congruent (74 of 82). These results are in rather sharp contrast for those data found for the parent group, a disparity which will be reviewed in greater detail in Chapter V. (See Table 29).

Congruence Analysis for Item #1: Encourage children to do what the teacher says. With an overall congruence percentage of 65%, this item obtained a ranking of third. Given the very small number of normatively negative responses (n=2), it is clear that the 65% figure is comprised primarily from the positive norm responses, of which 63% were congruent with estimates of frequency of occurrence. Sixty-three percent of educators believed this is a role parents should and do play. (See Table 30).

Congruence Analysis for Item #2: Take children on trips, read

Table 29

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 1-14

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	198	374	35
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	8	74	90
Total			42

Table 30

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 1

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	29	17	63
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	2	100
Total			65 (rank=3)

to them and explain things. Only 35% of the response pairs were congruent and all were derived from positive norm responses as there were no instance of educators believing that this was a role parents should not play. (See Table 31).

Congruence Analysis for Item #3: Attend workshops run by the schools. This item received the lowest ranking based on its overall congruence percentage of merely 18%. Thirty-six of 43 responses indicating parents should play this role were paired with negative estimates of parents actually engaging in it. Thus, in only 16% of the cases did educators believe that parents were playing the role they should be. (See Table 32).

Congruence Analysis for Item #4: Meet with the teacher to get suggestions. The response pattern for this item is quite similar to that found for the previous item, except the congruence percentages is slightly higher. Educators believe this is a role parents do not play to the extent they should. (See Table 33).

Congruence Analysis for Item #5: Trained by teacher in home-training techniques. The response pattern for this item is again similar to the pattern observed for the previous two. Very few (n=3) negative norm responses, and a very

Table 31

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 2

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	17	32	35
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	0	0
Total			35 (rank=8)



Table 32

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 3

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	7	36	16
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	2	100
Total			18 (rank=14)

Table 33

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item #4

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	13	35	27
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	0	0
Total			26 (rank=11)

small percentage of the positive norm responses being paired congruently with positive estimates of frequency of occurrence (congruence = 18%). (See Table 34).

Congruence Analysis for Item #6: Serve as homework helpers.

Whereas the congruence percentage for the positive norm responses remains quite low (22%), the more substantial congruence ratio for the negative norm response (73%) does raise the overall percentage to 33%. Ratings indicate educators, in 22% of the cases, believe parents are fulfilling a role they should, whereas 73% believe parents should not fill the role and they do not. (See Table 35).

Congruence Analysis for Item #7: Teaching assistants in other

classes. While only a very small percent of positive norm responses were congruent (10%), 14 of 15 negative norm responses were also estimated to have a low frequency of occurrence (yielding a congruence percentage of 93%). Teachers do not believe parents should or do act as teaching assistants. (See Table 36).

Congruence Analysis for Item #8: Teaching assistants in  
child's classroom. The response pattern for this item follows very closely the pattern seen in the previous analysis, except that for both positive and negative norm

Table 34

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 5

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	8	36	18
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	3	100
Total			23 (rank=12)

Table 35

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 6

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	8	29	22
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	3	8	73
Total			33 (rank=9)

Table 36

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 7

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	3	27	10
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	14	93
Total			38 (rank=7)

Table 37

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 8

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	2	9	18
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	34	100
Total			80 (rank=1)

responses there is an increase in the percent of congruent estimates to 18% and 100% respectively. (See Table 37).

Congruence Analysis for Item #9: Meet with teacher to exchange ideas. There were no negative norm responses on this item and of the positive norm responses, 41% were congruent. (See Table 38).

Congruent Analysis for Item #10: Participate in educational decision making. This item received the highest ranking of congruent responses, 69%. This is based nearly exclusively on the significant number of congruent responses in the positive norm category (only one response was found in the negative norm mode). (see Table 39).

Congruent Analysis for Item #11: Invited to serve on committees. The pattern for this item is quite similar to the previous one, except the congruence percentage is somewhat lower (53% vs. 69%). The source of the overall congruence measure originates nearly exclusively from positive norm responses given the absence of a significant number of such negative responses (in this case, n=1). (See Table 40).

Congruent Analysis for Item #12: Welcome and give support to



Table 38

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 9

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	20	29	41
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	0	0
Total			41 (rank=6)

Table 39

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 10

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	33	15	69
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	1	100
Total			69 (rank=2)

Table 40

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 11

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	24	21	53
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	1	100
Total			54 (rank=4)

new parents. With only two responses in the negative norm category, it is the estimates of frequency of occurrence which are paired with positive norm responses which contribute in a major way to the overall congruence score. For this item, only 24% of the positive norm responses were paired congruently, yielding an overall congruence percentage of 28%. (See Table 41).

Congruence Analysis for Item #13: Trainers of other parents.

An even lower percent of positive norm responses were paired congruently for this item (15%) which coupled with a very small number of negative norm responses (n=5) resulted in an overall congruence percentage of 22%. Educators strongly believe this is a role parents do not play. (See Table 42).

Congruence Analysis for Item #14: Parents have own

organization. Nearly half the positive norm responses (n=36) and 60% of the negative norm responses (n=5) were congruent. (See Table 43).

Congruence Analysis of Parent and Educator Responses

Table 44 presents a summary of chi-square analyses of parent and educator congruence responses. Included in the table are the number of congruent and incongruent responses for parents and educators, the chi-square value, degrees of freedom and significance level. The structure of the

Table 41

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 12

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	11	34	24
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	0	2	100
Total			28 (rank=10)

Table 42

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 13

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	6	35	15
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	1	4	80
Total			22 (rank=13)

Table 43

Cross Tabulation and Congruence Analysis  
Of Should and Do Responses By Educators  
For Item # 14

Should Play Responses	Do Play Responses		Percent Congruent
	Always/ Often	Sometimes/ Never	
Strongly Agree/ Agree	17	19	47
Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	2	3	60
Total			49 (rank=5)

chi-square tables provides a statistical test of the difference in degree of congruence between the parent and educator groups for each of the fourteen item pairs and for the total (item pairs 1-14).

An examination of the totals reveals that the parent group responded significantly more congruently than the educator group ( $\chi^2=138.009$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This finding is consistent with the overall trend evident in an examination of the individual items. In 11 of the 14 item analyses, there is a significant difference between the parent and educator group, the result of the parent group having a higher proportion of congruent responses. The only items which did not yield a statistical significant result #8, #10, and #11. Only on item #11, did the parent group have a disproportionately greater number of incongruent responses. These findings indicate that parents had a greater likelihood of agreeing that they engage in those roles in which they believe they should. Educators were less likely to estimate that parents participate in roles educators believed they should. (See Table 44).

Respondents Suggestions to Enhance the Parent-School  
Relationship

The first section of Part D requested respondents to list activities they believe would enhance the parent-school



Table 44

## Congruence Analysis Of Parent And Educator Responses

Item	Parent Responses		Educator Responses		Statistics		
	Congruent	Not Congruent	Congruent	Not Congruent	Chi-Sq	df	Sig <sup>a</sup>
#1	115	25	31	17	6.408	1	.02
#2	108	30	17	32	31.155	1	.001
#3	64	72	9	36	10.181	1	.001
#4	98	39	13	36	30.200	1	.001
#5	79	57	11	36	16.724	1	.001
#6	100	34	16	32	26.050	1	.001
#7	97	34	17	28	19.515	1	.001
#8	118	14	36	9	2.700	1	.20
#9	96	39	20	29	14.468	1	.001
#10	104	34	34	15	0.687	1	.50
#11	63	71	25	21	0.736	1	.50
#12	62	71	13	34	5.093	1	.05
#13	87	45	10	36	26.957	1	.001
#14	82	45	20	21	3.246	1	.10
Total	1273	610	272	382	138.009	1	.001

<sup>a</sup> Significance values in terms of  $p <$

relationship. The activities were coded into four categories; educational changes, additional communication/counseling sessions, general political/system change and an increase in the numbers of visits between parents and school. The responses were converted to percentages and the results are presented in Table 45.

Table 46 provides the responses to the second section of Part D, "does parent participation have an impact on educational decision making?"

Part G requested respondents to comment on and suggest methods for improving the parent-educator relationship. The responses were assigned to one of five categories:

1. target of problem is parent.
2. target of problem is teacher.
3. target of problem is school/system/program.
4. no problem and a constructive suggestion offered.
5. general satisfactions.

The results are presented in Table 47.

In part D, the greatest number of responses (n=106, 41%) referred to the need for more frequent communication among parents and educators to enhance the parent-school relationship.

Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents believed that parent participation does have an impact on educational decision making.

There were only 88 responses to Part G, of which the greatest proportion (33%) were primarily constructive in character. Critical statements tended to be directed at the school system, not at educators or parents.

Table 45

Activities To Enhance The  
Parent-Educator Relationship

Activity	N	Percent
Educational	53	20
Communication	106	41
Political	58	22
Visits	45	17
Total	262	100

Table 46

Does Parent Participation Have An Impact On  
Educational Decision Making

Response	N	Percent
Yes	151	80
No	28	15
Ambiguous	10	5
Total	189	100

Table 47

## Analysis Of Open-ended Comments

---

Comment Category	N	Percent
Parent Targeted As Problem	13	15
Teacher Targeted As Problem	11	12
School/System/Program Targeted As Problem	23	26
Constructive Suggestion	29	33
General Satisfaction	12	14
Total	88	100

---

## C H A P T E R V

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The advent of Public Law 94-142 brings to special education a mandate to include parents in their children's education, at least in terms of sharing in the decision making to shape the educational program for their child/children. The statutory guidelines provided in the law furnish a catalyst for developing new relationships between educator and parent but without defining the specific form the participation and collaboration will assume. With the absence of a body of literature which identifies the salient issues, accounts of how other school systems have evolved successful collaborative relationships and steps to pursue to facilitate the development of an effective partnership, it has remained for the parents and educators to confront the challenge of transforming the concept of parent participation into practice. One can only speculate, at this time, in what ways and to what extent research findings might contribute to facilitate this innovation in the educational enterprise.

A review of the research literature does reveal that children learn better when parents and educators collaborate. However, due to a lack of clarity of the parent role - the so

called boundary problem - the collaboration frequently engenders tension between the parties. This study sought to delineate the views of parents and educators of children with special educational needs regarding parent participation in the educational process. A primary objective is to have the results serve as a basis for helping to understand how the quality and effectiveness of the parent-educator relationship may be enhanced. More specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

1. What do parents and educators believe should be parents' roles in the educational process?
2. What do parents and educators believe are the current roles parents do play in the educational process?
3. How congruent are parent and educator beliefs about the roles parents should play and their estimates of the relative frequency parents do assume these roles.

Data to answer the questions were obtained from a seven part anonymous questionnaire which was mailed to a random sample of 25% of parents of children with special educational needs and to all the professional personnel affiliated with the special education program in a city school system in western Massachusetts. There were 209 respondents (a response rate of 58%).

The questionnaire was adapted from a twelve-item instrument developed by Cohen (1977) to survey teacher receptivity to parent participation in the education of handicapped children. The twelve-items represented various parent roles, ranging from the traditional home support for the school to the current idea of a partnership between home and school. This study expanded on the range of the Cohen study and was modified in the following major ways:

1. Receptivity to the concept of parent participation involves both educators and parents. Therefore both groups were included as subjects in the survey.
2. Two significant items were added to the questionnaire. One related specifically to parent involvement in educational decision making (item #10), consistent with the legal stipulation of parent participation in the development of their child/children's Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.). The second item (#14) focuses on belonging to groups comprised exclusively of parents of special needs children.
3. Respondents estimated the degree to which parents currently assumed the 14 roles described in the questionnaire.
4. Included in the questionnaire was a section for open-ended items allowing respondents to furnish additional views about the parent-educator relationship.



### Interpretations of the Findings

Parent and educator ratings of the roles parents should play in the educational process demonstrate general agreement between the two groups, both indicating considerable support for the practice. However, within this overall trend, there are particular findings which provide some further insight into specific aspects of the relationship between the two.

The historical boundaries separating the roles parents and educators play have remained unchanged in some instances but are undergoing redefinition in others. Classroom management is still seen as the exclusive domain of the teacher. Thus, both educators and parents agree that parents should not serve as teaching assistants in the classroom. Furthermore, the historical role of parents aiding the teacher by providing home enrichment remains strongly entrenched, as does the model of parent coming to the teacher to obtain guidance and counseling in order to work more effectively with the child. These roles share in common the perception of the teacher as the principle instructor of the child.

However, an evolving role is developing for parents which was not historically apparent, namely, joining in the educational decision making. Both constituencies strongly

support this role for parents. One cannot help but speculate about the origins of this new pattern and wonder how attributable it is to the political movements of the 1960's and the passage of PL94-142.

So, there is general consensus that parents have a contribution to make to the educational process and their participation is valued by both groups. The question is to what extent do parents actually undertake these roles? Responses to Part B of the questionnaire address this matter.

Again, there is general agreement between parents and educators. Both estimate that parents do not undertake these roles to the degree they should. Of particular note is that educators estimate this disparity to be greater than do parents.

The data themselves do not provide any direct explanation for this differential response pattern, but we may know enough about educators and parents and about behavioral and social science principles to make some informed inferences. Parents may believe that are doing more than they are (i.e., overestimating their participation) because they are doing more now than ever before. It is likely that after having been frustrated from becoming more

involved in the educational system, a newly emerging role may be exaggerated. On the other hand, educators, for their part, may be involving parents more than ever before and from this newly emerging partnership they may be generalizing more from isolated cases of refusal or lack of cooperation. Thus, it may be perceived as perfectly appropriate now to invite parent participation (more so than ever before) so that it is also more likely to get a refusal. Such refusals may be overestimated in educators' minds with the result that parents, as an entity, may be inaccurately labeled. In the absence of empirical data, the accuracy of the estimates remains elusive.

Put more simply, it may be that parents tend to recall all the roles they do play and emphasize these; and educators may recall all the roles parents do not assume and emphasize those. Whatever the case, it needs to be pointed out that parents, in fact, undertake roles relating to their child/children's education which are obscured because they take place outside of the arena where educators are likely to witness them. Having parents and educators share their perceptions about the roles parents should and do play in the presence of each other might go a long way toward resolving some of the misconceptions and inaccuracies held by each.

Finally, there is the third matter of congruence of responses. Quite clearly, both parents and educators share the view that parents do not engage in roles in which they should not, the coefficient of congruence for negative norms being very high for each group. What this finding reveals is that there remain jointly agreed upon prohibitions about what parents should not do and there is consistent behavioral conformity to these beliefs.

On the other hand, educators demonstrated considerably more incongruence in their response pattern than did parents. That is, they were less likely to believe that parents were assuming the roles they should with the expected frequency. Again, we do not have any empirical data at this point either to substantiate or refute their estimates. However, it is quite likely that educators may remain unaware of many of the roles which parents do play. Greater awareness about the roles each do, in fact, play would no doubt substantially enhance the quality of the relationship between the two.

#### Implications of the Findings

The design of this study does not lend itself to making more specific prediction about the predicted efficacy of one particular intervention strategy versus another. However, the findings do provide some basis for making informed inferences. It remains for the change agents to assess these

inferences in terms of the various strategy options available to them.

A state of disequilibrium between an individual's expectation of what should be and what is, is more likely to lead to some action or movement than when beliefs and behavior are syntonic (Festinger, 1957). The strategic question which this assumption addresses is in regard to which role(s) should an intervention program be aimed to maximize the potential for success. In those instances where there is differential degree of congruence between parents and educators, one of the groups may be more likely to be motivated to accept change and the other group, perhaps less likely (more resistant). On the otherhand, in those instances where there is consensus, in terms of degree of congruence about what should be and what is, parents and educators are "starting off" as it were, in the same place and less friction is likely to appear between them. Of the four roles on the questionnaire which elicited comparable congruence, parents as participants in the educational decision making role, stands out. It is an activity for which there is some external source of motivation, i.e., the law, and which was highlighted by the sample as one in which they would be most willing to participate and, indeed, wanted more of.

This, then would appear to be an area which is amenable to working jointly with parents and educators for increased and more effective parent participation. Conferences and communication are cited as requested activities, parent participation in decision making is an item on which parents and educators have similar congruence coefficients, and, finally it is a function specifically identified in the law.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

This study was undertaken in order to extend our understanding of parents' participating in their child/children's education. Focus was given to a survey of parents and educators on their receptivity to the concept of parent participation.

Based on the finding of this study, the recommendations for further research are:

1. A study of parents and educators perceptions about the roles educators should assume with the family of a child with special needs.
2. A study of strategies employed by educators and parents to resolve their differences in educational program planning.
3. A study of different school systems with high levels of parent participation to learn what factors contributed to this high prevalence.

4. A study of the attitudes of parents who have been active in the classrooms of their preschool handicapped child to their involvement in the elementary and secondary school.
5. An empirical study examining the actual extent of parent participation in the schools.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abeson, A. and Zettel, J. The end of the quiet revolution: education for all handicapped children act of 1975. Exceptional Children, October 1977, p.114-128.
- AFT Council urges teachers to demand improvements in new handicapped law. American Teacher, January 1977.
- Anderson, K. The shopping behavior of parents of mentally retarded children; the professional person's role. Mental Retardation, August 1971, p.3-5.
- Ballard, J. and Zettel, J. Public law 94-142 and section 504: what they say about rights and protections. Exceptional children, November 1977, p.177-185.
- Barker and Gump. Big school, small school. California: Stanford University Press, 1964.
- Barsch, R. The parent-teacher partnership. Arlington, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1969.
- Barsch, R. The parent of a handicapped child. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1968.
- Beach, J. (Ed). The initial impact of federal special education legislation, PL94-142. Journal of education, Boston University, School of Education, Boston, Massachusetts. Vol. 161 #3, Summer 1970.
- Bell, C. Parent attitudes and involvement in the placement process of handicapped students in special education programs in the Aurora school district. Dissertation Abstracts, 1976, p.91.
- Boles, G. Personality factors in mothers of cerebral palsied children. Genetic Psychology Monographs, 1959, 59, p.159-213.
- Borg, W. and Gall, M. Educational research; an introduction. New York: David McKay Co., 1971.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. Is early intervention effective? In Friedlander, B. Exceptional infant. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1975, p.449-475.
- Drown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 745. CT686. 1954.
- Buck v. Bell Superintendent, 292 U.S. 274, 1927.



- Burello, L. and Sage, D. Leadership and change in special education. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979.
- Buskin, M. Parent power-a candid handbook for dealing with your child's school. New York: Walker & Co., 1975.
- Caplan, M. and Nelson, S.D. On being useful - the nature and consequences of psychological research on social problems. American Psychologist, March 1973, p.199-211.
- Cohen, S.; Semmes, M.; Guralnick, M. Public law 94-142 and the education of preschool handicapped children. Exceptional Children, January 1979, p.279-285.
- Cohen, S. Teacher receptivity to the concept of parent participation in the education of handicapped children: some preliminary findings. Rehabilitation Literature, May 1977, Vol. 38, #5.
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Education, Regulation 766, September 1978.
- Davis, D.; Clasby, M.; Zerchykiv, R.; and Powers, B. Patterns of citizen participation in educational decision making. Boston, Massachusetts, 1973.
- Davis, D. Schools where parents make a difference. Boston, Massachusetts, 1976.
- Davis, D. Citizen participation in education. Boston, Massachusetts, 1973.
- Dillman, D. Mail and telephone surveys: the total design method. New York: John Wiley, 1978.
- Diane v. State Board of Education, Civil Action No. C-70 37 R.F.P. (M.D.Cal. Jan 7, 1970 and June 18, 1973).
- Ewert, J.C. and Green, M.W. Conditions associated with the mothers estimate of the ability of her retarded child. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 1957, 62, p.521-533.
- Fantini, M.D. Whats best for the children?-resolving the power struggle between parents and teachers. New York: Anchor Press, 1974.
- Farber, E. Family organization and crisis: maintenance of integration in families with a severely mentally

- retarded child. Monograph of Society for Research in Child Development, 1960, Vol.25, No.1, Serial No.75.
- Farber, B. Effects of a severely mentally retarded child on family integration. Monograph of Society for Research in Child Development, 1959, Vol.24, No 2, Serial No.71, p.91-112.
- Feldman, M.; Byalick, R.; and Rosedale, M.P. Parents and professionals: a partnership in special education. Exceptional children, May 1975, p.551-554.
- Festinger, L. A theory of cognitive dissonance. Evanston, Illinois: Row Peterson, 1957.
- Fishbein, M. Attitude theory and Measurement. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967.
- Friedman, S. A. How was school today, dear? (fine, what's for dinner)? New York: Readers Digest Press, 1977.
- Fox, D. J. The research process in education. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969.
- Gay, L. R. Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application. Columbus Ohio: Charles Merrill Publishing Co. 1976.
- Gearheart, B. R. Education of the exceptional child: history, present practices and trends. Scranton, Pennsylvania: Intext Educational Publishers, 1972.
- Gerwitz, J. Education Daily, NEA, March 22, 1978.
- Gilberg, A. The stress of parenting. Child Psychiatry Human Development. Vol. 6 (2) Winter 1975.
- Goldstein, J.; Freud, A. and Solnit, A. Beyond the best interests of the child. New York: The Free Press, 1973.
- Goodacre, E. School and home. National Foundation for Educational Research in England & Wales. London, Wim England, 1970.
- Gordon, I. J. Parent education and parent involvement: retrospect and prospect. Childhood Education, 54:2, p.71-78.
- Gordon, I.J. and Erievogel, W. F. Building effective home school relationships. Mass: Allyn & Bacon, 1976.

- Graliker, Parmelee and Koch. Attitude study of parents of mentally retarded children. Pediatrics, November, 1959.
- Green, L. and Allen, G. Parents and teachers (partners or rivals). Union LTD, London, 1968.
- Guralnick, M.J. (Ed). Early intervention and the integration of handicapped and non-handicapped children. Baltimore, University Park Press, 1978.
- Hamilton, J. Mothers expectancies for their young handicapped children. Dissertation Abstracts. 1977 p.2043A-2044A.
- Hetherington, E.M. and Parke, R.D. Child psychology: a contemporary viewpoint. New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1979.
- Hewett, F. and Forness, S. Education of exceptional learners. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 1977.
- Hobson v. Hansen, 265F. Supp. 902 (D.D.C. 1967).
- Hymes, J. Jr. Effective home-school relations. Southern California Association for the Education of Young Children, Box 691, Sierra Madre, Calif., 91024, 1974.
- Jensen, G.D. and Kogan, K.L. Parental estimates of the future achievement of children with cerebral palsy. Journal of Mental Deficiency Research. VI #1 1962 p.56-64.
- Jersild, A. When teachers face themselves. New York: Teachers College Press, 1955.
- Kanner, L. Parents feelings about retarded children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency. 1953 Vol 57 p.375-383.
- Kappelman, M. and Ackerman, P. Between parent and school. New York: The Dial Press, 1977.
- Katz, M. Class, bureaucracy, and schools. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971.
- Kelly, E. Parent-teacher interaction: a special educational perspective. Seattle Washington: Special Child Publishers, Bernie Straub Publishing Co., 1974.

- Kroth, R. Parents; powerful and necessary allies. Teaching Exceptional Children, Spring, 1973.
- Lane, H. The wild boy of aveyron. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Larry P. v. Riles, Civil Action No. C-71-2270, 343 F Supp. 1306 (N.D. Cal., 1972).
- Lightfoot, S.L. Worlds apart-relationships between families and schools. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1970.
- Markel, G. and Greenbaum, I. The role of the parent in a team approach to effective educational planning. ERIC Document ED163722, May 1978.
- Marion, R.L. Educators, parents and exceptional children. Rockville, Maryland: An Aspen Publication, 1981.
- Mead, M. The school in American culture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951.
- Michaelis, C. Home and school partnerships in exceptional education. Rockville, Maryland: An Aspen Publication, 1980.
- Miller, J. An evaluation of supplementary education programs in state schools for the retarded. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, April 1979.
- Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia, 348F. Supp 866 (D., D.C. 1972).
- Nebgen, M.K. Parent involvement in Title I programs. Educational Forum, v 43/2, January 1979, p165-173.
- Nedler, S. and McAfee, O. Working with parents. Belmont California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1979.
- Oppenheim, A.N. Questionnaire design and attitude measurement. New York: Basic Books, 1966.
- Osborne, E. The parent-teacher partnership. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1959.
- Parent involvement programs - a growing trend in special education. Exceptional Children, May 1975.
- Pedulla, B. Mothers perceptions of their retarded childrens development; selected mother and child variables to

realism. Dissertation Abstracts. 1975, Clinical Psychology 3619E.

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania F. Supp 279 (E.D. Pa. 1972, Order, Injunction and Consent Agreement).

Public Law 93-112, Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sec. 504, July 26, 1973.

Public Law 93-380, Education Amendments of 1974, August 21, 1974.

Public Law 94-142, Education for all Handicapped Children Act, November 29, 1975.

PL94-142, The education for all handicapped children act of 1975. Federal register, August 23, 1977.

Redl, F. and Wattenberg. Mental hygiene in teaching. New York, Harcourt Brace and World, 1959.

Rheingold, H. L. Interpreting mental retardation to parents. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1945, 9, 142-143.

Rich, A. Of woman born. New York: Bantam Books, 1977.

Rutherford, R. and Edgar, E. Teachers and parents: a guide to interaction and cooperation. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1979.

Schaefer, E. and Edgerton, M. Development of inventories for assessing parent and teacher interaction and involvement. North Carolina University, Chapel Hill, July 1974.

Schraft, C. Developing parent participation programs in schools. ERIC Document ED167568, May 1978.

Scout, T. and Bordeus, S. Parental involvement and confidence in the school. High School Journal, October 1979, p.23-29.

Scribner, H. B. and Stevens, L. E. Make your schools work. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.

Selltiz C., Wrightsman, L. and Cook, S. Research methods in social relations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

- Siegel, S. Nonparametric statistics for the behavioral sciences. New York: McGraw Hill, 1956.
- Turnbull, A. Parent professional interactions. In H.E. Snell (Ed.) Systematic instruction of the moderately and severely handicapped. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1978.
- Turnbull, A. and Turnbull, H. Parents Speak Out: Views from the other side of the two-way mirror. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973.
- Turnbull, H. and Turnbull, A., Deinstitutionalization and the law. Mental Retardation, 1975, 13, p.14-20.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980. Census of population and housing, Berkshire County, November 1980.
- Warfield, G.J. Mothers of retarded children review a parent education program. Exceptional Children, May 1975, p.559-562.
- Weatherly, R.A. Reforming special education: policy implementation from state level to street level - Chapter 766. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1979.
- Wolfensberger, W. The origin and nature of our institutional models. Syracuse, New York: Human Policy Press, 1975.
- Wolfensberger, W. Normalization. Toronto, Canada: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1972.
- Wolfensberger, W. and Kurtz, R. Measurement of parents perceptions of their childrens development. Genetic psychology Monographs, 1971, 83, 3-92.
- Yoshida, R., Fenton, K., Kaufman and Maxwell, J. Parent involvement in special education pupil planning process: the schools perspective. Exceptional Children, April 1978.
- Yoshida, R. and Gottlieb, J. A model of parental participation in the pupil planning process. Mental Retardation, June 1977 p.17-20.
- Zuk, G. H. Autistic Distortions in parents of retarded children. Journal of Consulting Psychology, Vol 23 42, 1959.

APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire

What role(s) do you believe parents of children with special education needs should play in the educational process?

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements presented below. There are no right or wrong answers. The best answers are those that reflect your feelings.

Part A

Circle one of the available choices following each statement.

There are four possible answers:

Strongly Agree = SA

Agree = A

Disagree = D

Strongly Disagree = SD

Statements	Answers
1. Parents should encourage their children to do what the teacher says.	SA A D SD
2. Parents should take the children on as many trips as possible, read to them, and explain things to them.	SA A D SD
3. Parents should attend workshops run by a social worker, or counselor at school.	SA A D SD
4. Parents should meet with the teacher to get suggestions for ways they can help their children learn better.	SA A D SD
5. Parents should be trained by the teacher or others in the school in home-training techniques.	SA A D SD
6. Parents should serve as homework helpers.	SA A D SD
7. Parents should be teaching assistants in special needs classes (other than their children's).	SA A D SD
8. Parents should work as teaching assistants in the same classrooms in which their children are placed.	SA A D SD
9. Parents should meet with the teacher to exchange ideas on ways both can work together to help the child learn better.	SA A D SD
10. Parents should participate in making educational decisions about their children's programs.	SA A D SD
11. Parents should be invited to serve on planning and advisory committees on special education in the school system.	SA A D SD
12. Parents should welcome and give support to parents of new children admitted into special programs.	SA A D SD
13. Parents should be trainers of other parents (for example, in home-teaching and management techniques).	SA A D SD
14. Parents of special needs children should have their own organization in the school system.	SA A D SD

Please add any appropriate roles that have been left out.



What role(s) do parents of children with special education needs play in the education process?

Please indicate the frequency that each activity presented in the statements below occur. *There are no right or wrong answers.*

**Part B**

Please circle the answer you believe is most accurate.

There are four possible answers:

Always = A

Often = O

Sometimes = S

Never = N

Statements	Answers
1. Parents encourage their children to do what the teacher says.	A O S N
2. Parents take the children on as many trips as possible, read to them and explain things to them.	A O S N
3. Parents attend workshops run by the school.	A O S N
4. Parents meet with the teacher to get suggestions for ways they can help their children learn better.	A O S N
5. Parents are trained by the teacher or others in the school in home-training techniques.	A O S N
6. Parents serve as homework helpers.	A O S N
7. Parents are teaching assistants in special needs classes other than their children's.	A O S N
8. Parents work as teaching assistants in the same classrooms in which their children are placed.	A O S N
9. Parents meet with the teacher to exchange ideas on ways both can work together to help the child learn better.	A O S N
10. Parents participate in making educational decisions about their children's programs.	A O S N
11. Parents are invited to serve on planning and advisory committees on special education in the school system.	A O S N
12. Parents welcome and give support to parents of new children admitted into special programs.	A O S N
13. Parents are trainers of other parents (for example, in home-teaching and management techniques).	A O S N
14. Parents of special needs children have their own organization in the school system.	A O S N

Please add any appropriate roles that have been left out.

The activities listed below are for parents and educators. Please indicate the degree to which you believe the activities would be helpful in improving the parent-educator relationship.

### Part C

Please circle the answers that most accurately reflect your position.

Activity	How helpful?		
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	none	little	much
2. Child development courses.	none	little	much
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	none	little	much
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	none	little	much
5. Educators and Parents on school policy committees.	none	little	much
6. Seminar on how schools work, include laws, systems, budgets.	none	little	much
7. School-parent newsletter.	none	little	much
8. Counseling sessions for parents and teachers.	none	little	much
9. Home visits.	none	little	much
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities.	none	little	much

### Part D

Additional questions . . .

11. Name three important activities that you believe would enhance the parent-school relationship.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

12. Does parent participation have an impact on educational decision making? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comment

If the school offered the following activities, would you participate?

### Part E

Please circle the answers that most accurately reflect your position.

Activity	Would You Participate?		
1. Workshops on ways to help children learn.	Yes	Uncertain	No
2. Child development courses.	Yes	Uncertain	No
3. Courses on teaching techniques.	Yes	Uncertain	No
4. Individual conferences on child's progress.	Yes	Uncertain	No
5. Educators and Parents on school policy committees.	Yes	Uncertain	No
6. Seminar on how schools work, include laws, systems, budgets.	Yes	Uncertain	No
7. School-parent newsletter.	Yes	Uncertain	No
8. Counseling sessions for parents and teachers.	Yes	Uncertain	No
9. Home visits.	Yes	Uncertain	No
10. Inservice workshops on specific disabilities.	Yes	Uncertain	No

## Demographic Data

## Part F

All Respondents: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

[Please answer either the parent or educator section]

---

## PARENTS SECTION

- |                 |             |                                                |                                      |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Age of child | 3-5 _____   | 2. Years in special<br>education classes _____ | 3. Primary Handicapping<br>Condition |
|                 | 6-9 _____   |                                                | mild _____                           |
|                 | 10-13 _____ |                                                | moderate _____                       |
|                 | 14-18 _____ |                                                | severe _____                         |
|                 | other _____ |                                                |                                      |
4. Sex of child: female \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_
- 

## EDUCATORS SECTION

- |                                          |             |                                                |                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Age of children with<br>whom you work | 3-5 _____   | 2. Years working in<br>special education _____ | 3. Primary Handicapping<br>Condition of children |
|                                          | 6-9 _____   |                                                | mild _____                                       |
|                                          | 10-13 _____ |                                                | moderate _____                                   |
|                                          | 14-18 _____ |                                                | severe _____                                     |
|                                          | other _____ |                                                |                                                  |
- 

## Part G

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the parent-educator relationship? If so, please use this space for that purpose. Also any suggestions you may have for improving parent-educator relationship will be appreciated.

Your contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. A summary of the results will be sent to you.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Nagler  
P.O. Box 678  
Pittsfield, Mass. 01202

APPENDIX B  
Pretest Cover Letter



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*University of Massachusetts*  
*Amherst 01003*

November 14, 1980

Dear Parents and Educators,

You are being asked to pilot the enclosed survey about parent participation in the Pittsfield School System.

Please read the letter and questionnaire. Tell me how you would improve it. Feel free to write comments on it and circle any words or ideas that are not clear and state why. Does any aspect suggest bias on the part of the researcher? Does the questionnaire create a positive impression, ~~one~~ that will motivate people to answer it? How does the cover letter sound? Your input would be greatly appreciated.

I thank you for taking the time to participate in this project. If you have any questions please call collect 518-392-2041. Please return the questionnaire and letter with your ideas in the enclosed stamped envelope by November 21st.

Sincerely,

Barbara Nagler  
P.O. Box 676  
Pittsfield, MA. 01202

Enc.

APPENDIX C  
Special Education Director  
Letter of Support



## *Pittsfield Public Schools*

*Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201*

Superintendent  
JOHN C. DAVIS, PH.D.

Department of Special Education  
HOWARD J. EBERWEIN, JR.  
*Director*

Dear Parents and Educators:

The Pittsfield Public Schools have consented to allow Ms. Barbara Nagler, a doctoral candidate in special education at the University of Massachusetts, to undertake an attitude survey of parents and educators of children with handicapping conditions. The survey, to be conducted by mail, will explore ways in which parents and educators believe they may work together effectively in the educational process.

Not all the parents and educators will receive the questionnaire. About 300 parents and educators will be chosen at random to be participants in the final study. However, first a smaller sample, about 25 persons, will be asked to review and provide comments about the questionnaire before it is finalized and mailed. All this should take place within the next two months.

We believe that the school system will be able to benefit from the results of surveys such as this. We urge you to participate, recognizing that all responses are strictly confidential and anonymously provided.

The results of the survey will be shared with all of you and with the school system. If you have any questions or wish to communicate with Ms. Nagler, you may get in touch with her by mail or by calling her at home, collect, 518 392-2041.

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed, stamped envelope. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Howard J. Eberwein, Jr.  
Director  
SPECIAL EDUCATION

egs  
Enclosure

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire Cover Letter





*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*University of Massachusetts*  
*Amherst 01003*

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

November 1980

Dear Parents and Educators,

The new Federal and State laws require parent participation in the educational process of children with special needs. This survey has been prepared in order to acquire information about parent participation in the Pittsfield School Systems special education program.

I am conducting this survey as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Massachusetts. I believe it's important for parents and educators to play a significant role in solving some of the problems we face in this important area of education, therefore, I'm asking you to participate. It should take about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data will be anonymously collected from:

1. Parents of children with special educational needs.
2. Teachers of children with special needs.
3. Educational administrators associated with the special education program.

A brief summary of the findings will be mailed to you. The overall results will be shared with the school system to aid in developing an operations manual to enhance the quality of cooperation between parents of children with special needs and school personnel. If you would like to discuss the project, I can be reached at 518-392-2041. All responses will be treated with strict adherence to all confidential reporting rules.

The Pittsfield Public School supports this survey effort and request that you help by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire by \_\_\_\_\_. A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

I appreciate your expending the time and effort in assisting me in this survey.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Nagler*

Barbara Nagler  
 P.O. Box 676  
 Pittsfield, MA. 01202

Enc.

APPENDIX E  
Reminder Postal Card

Dear Parents and Educators,

I recently mailed you a questionnaire seeking your opinion about parent participation in the educational process.

If you have already returned the questionnaire, thank you. Your response is important. If you have not yet returned it, please do so.

If you did not receive it, or you misplaced the survey or have any questions, please call collect (518-392-2041).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Barbara Nagler  
P.O. BOX 676  
Pittsfield, Mass. 01202

APPENDIX F

Cover Letter, Final Request



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*University of Massachusetts*  
*Amherst 01003*

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

January 21, 1981

Dear Parents and Educators,

Last month you received a questionnaire about Parent Participation in the educational process. If you have already returned the questionnaire consider this letter a "thank you."

Because the responses were anonymous, I must send a reminder to everyone, even those people who have already answered.

For those of you who have not yet responded, I am enclosing another questionnaire for your convenience. I would strongly encourage you to respond; your answers are important.

Please return the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope within the week. If you have any questions, call me collect at 518-392-2041.

Thank you for your cooperation. You will receive a summary of the results this spring.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Nagler*

Barbara Nagler  
 P.O. Box 676  
 Pittsfield, Mass. 01202

Enc.



