

1-1-1975

# Parent participation in the education of the learning disabled child

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PARENT PARTICIPATION  
IN THE  
EDUCATION OF  
THE LEARNING DISABLED CHILD

by  
Faye M. Wahl

A RESEARCH PAPER  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION  
(SPECIAL EDUCATION - LEARNING DISABILITIES)  
CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
May, 1975

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Date Aug. 30, 1974

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"A learning disability involves the child first, but the involvement of the parent in the child's successes and failures in learning experiences cannot be underestimated."<sup>1</sup> "The key to managing him successfully lies in the parent and in their willingness to understand his otherness."<sup>2</sup>

All children normal or otherwise have the same basic needs for affection, acceptance, and approval. These needs most generally are met within the framework of the family with the parents being the prime contributors. Research has strongly established the importance of the family structure in childrearing and the effects of the mother-child relationship on the physical, social, and emotional growth of the child is without question.

It is within the confines of the family unit and under the care and supervision of the parents that the

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<sup>1</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Meeting Total Needs of Learning Disabled Children: A Forward Look (San Rafael, California: Academic Therapy Publications, 1970), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Richard S. Lewis, Alfred A. Strauss, and Laura E. Lehtinen, The Other Child (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1951), p. 115.

newborn infant is nurtured. Through parent guidance the dependent infant grows, acquires speech, takes those first hesitant steps, and gradually over a five or six year period attains the intellectual maturity, the emotional controls, and the social skills necessary for successful adjustment in the academic world.

There are, however, a certain percentage of children who for a variety of reasons do not follow the normal developmental pattern. At some time between birth and/or during elementary school the parents of these children are confronted with the knowledge that their child is different. This difference may manifest itself in numerous ways. However, the term learning-disabled shall be used to identify these "different" children.

#### Incidence and Definition

The exact number of learning-disabled children is not known. The number has been variously estimated at 1 to 30 percent of the school population depending on the criteria used.<sup>1</sup> More conservatively, the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (1968) placed the number at 1 to 3 percent of the school population. The Committee also provided the following definition for this sizable, yet presently undetermined, number of children:

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Lerner, Children with Learning Disabilities: Theories, Diagnosis, and Teaching Strategies. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 10.

Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or to environmental disadvantage.

#### Statement of the Problem

"There is longstanding and convincing evidence that in order to treat any handicapped child the understanding and cooperation of the parents is essential."<sup>1</sup> For the child to make a successful adjustment in his adult life he must have first had an adequate adjustment in his family. The parents' role in enabling him to make this adjustment is of critical importance. "Managing the other child is a full-time job. It is not beyond the ability of parents who work at it, but it is a job that must be learned."<sup>2</sup>

"The parent of the special child must be given a meaningful location in the community education program on a continuing basis if optimal benefits are desired for

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<sup>1</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Management of the Child with Learning Disabilities (San Rafael, California: Academic Therapy Publications, 1967), p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, Strauss, Lehtinen, The Other Child, p. 86.

the special child. There can no longer be argument on the question of 'whether or not the parent should be involved' but only argument on the question of 'how shall the parent be involved?'"<sup>1</sup> In response to this question the writer has undertaken to survey the literature on parent participation in the education of the learning disabled child. It is hoped that from this investigation the writer will gain better insight, understanding, and expertise in working with and for the learning disabled child and his parents.

#### Summary

The educational "hands off" policy toward parent involvement in the education of the learning disabled child is out-dated. The vital role of the parent in the total development of the child is recognized, and it is the writer's desire to become cognizant of the degree and manner in which the parents of learning disabled children can be involved in the educational program of their children.

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<sup>1</sup>Ray H. Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership (Arlington, Virginia: The Council for Exceptional Children, Inc., 1969), p. 18.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Overview

Parent involvement in the education of the learning disabled child is a relatively new phenomenon. The research studies reported have basically been concerned with the use of parent tutors in either a remedial teaching capacity or in perceptual training programs. Literature has, however, been devoted to the rationale and theories behind parent involvement programs, the means for successful implementation of these programs, as well as to the difficulties that may be encountered. There are important implications for the teacher/professional.

#### Reasons for Parent Involvement

...the parent of the special child is a neglected therapeutic resource on the rehabilitation scene. Professional failure to discover a set of procedures to effectively engage the parent to the learning advantage of the child has been a weakness in the construction of a solid rehabilitation model.<sup>1</sup>

Early identification, accurate diagnostic testing, and prescriptive teaching are all essential to the optimal

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, pp. 73-74.

development of the learning disabled child. However, the professional services necessary for such identification, diagnosis, and training are not always readily available. Funds and the necessary personnel for such services are in short supply. "The inability to provide the help needed for these children is especially frustrating since the task of remediating learning disabilities becomes more difficult as the child grows older."<sup>1</sup> No one is more acutely aware of this frustration than the parents of these children.

"The mushrooming of parent organizations strikingly shows how desperate parents are for information and aid for their children's conditions, for themselves, and for social action."<sup>2</sup> Their united effort has had tremendous influence on legislation and within their own communities. They seek information about their child's condition, the teaching programs devised for him, and his progress or lack of it. They want to know what they can do to help and how they can extend into the home the major methods used in the school.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James T. Neifert and William F. Gayton, "Parents and the Home Program Approach in the Remediation of Learning Disabilities," Journal of Learning Disabilities, VI (February, 1973), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Management, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The degree and means by which parents can be involved in the education of their learning disabled child have not been established. In many instances these parents have been left without guidelines or objectives as to what they might do to enhance and to supplement the education of their child outside the classroom.<sup>1</sup> This situation seems quite incongruous with one of the basic educational objectives of most learning disability programs--to plan a program to meet the total needs of the learning disabled child. "Parents and teachers together have the child under their observation and control through most of his waking hours. Adherence to regular routine; minimizing distracting influences; consistent treatment; close, kindly task direction and the like are far more effective when carried through at home and school."<sup>2</sup>

The learning disabled child needs someone to coordinate and supervise his academic program. He may also require help with social skills, behavior, organization and planning for an extended period of time. Such total involvement spanning a number of years is rarely assumed by the professional. Parents are the only people who can assume this role and maintain the

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<sup>1</sup>David A. Spidal. "A Cooperative Parent-Teacher Model Using the Project LIFE Instructional System," Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, 1972, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Meeting Total Needs, p. 21.

ongoing concern necessary for meeting the total needs of the child.<sup>1</sup>

Gordon defines teaching as "...setting the stage for learning, as modeling, as managing the environment, as giving information, as well as engaging in direct interaction...."<sup>2</sup> He states,

What parents do with their children in their various roles as information givers, managers of environment, modelers, stage setters, and direct teachers does influence the child's intellectual performance both during that time and later in school.<sup>3</sup>

Gordon regards parent education as a reasonable effort and, "...as in ancient times, the injunction is still true, we need parents who teach diligently unto their children."<sup>4</sup>

#### Summary

Special services for the learning disabled child are in great demand. These children require much individualized attention, endless repetition, and consistent structure. Unfortunately, funds are lacking and qualified personnel are not always available. The parents of the learning disabled child have banded together at the local, state, and national level in organizations dedicated to finding help for their children. They have dedicated much time,

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<sup>1</sup>Doreen Kronick. "To Whom Does He Belong, Parent or State?" Academic Therapy Quarterly, VIII (Fall, 1972), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Ira J. Gordon, "What Do We Know About Parents as Teachers?" Theory Into Practice, XI (June, 1972), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

effort, and money toward aiding their learning disabled child. They want involvement and need direction. Parents are a twenty-four hour commodity; a resource only beginning to be mined in the field of learning disabilities.

### Types of Parent Involvement

Were we to awaken tomorrow to an abundance of services for our children, there still would be a role for parents to play.

Current literature and research studies regarding parent involvement programs for the learning disabled child have basically been concerned with parent tutors either in a remedial type teaching capacity or in correcting perceptual deficits.

Helfert and Gayton describe the home program approach, a tutoring type program, whereby community agencies such as child guidance centers and psychoeducational clinics provide home based remedial programs for learning disabled children. In this program an educational therapist evaluates the child and designs a program to help remediate the child's disabilities. Emphasis is generally directed toward remediation of basic deficits such as deficiencies in eye-hand coordination, temporal-spatial translation, and form perception and is directed toward developing those readiness skills considered necessary for success in reading and arithmetic. The program is demonstrated to the parent by the therapist

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<sup>1</sup>Doreen Kronick, They Too Can Succeed: A Practical Guide for Parents of Learning-Disabled Children (San Rafael, California: Academic Therapy Publications), 1969, p. iii.

and is to be carried out daily in the home. Follow-up appointments are scheduled to evaluate the child's progress, make any necessary changes in the program, and discuss any concerns the parent might have. Neifert and Gayton's rationale for the home program is that it increases the number of children who can be helped with the available personnel, and it appears to be beneficial in terms of meeting the increased demands for professional services.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott conducted a ten-week study using fifty kindergarten children to measure the effectiveness of mothers conducting a structured visual perception program. The Frostig Program for the Development of Visual Perception was used with training, direction, and weekly conferences provided for the experimental mothers. Test result comparisons were made with a control group and on pretest-posttest results on the Frostig DTVP, Bender Visual Motor Gestalt, and the Metropolitan Readiness. Test results revealed statistically significant gains for the experimental group on the Frostig in comparison to the controls but did not show significant gains on the Metropolitan or the Bender. However, pretest/posttest analysis revealed that the amount of time the parent spent with the child made a significant difference in the improvement on these two measures. Abbott concluded that with training and

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<sup>1</sup>Neifert and Gayton, "Home Program Approach," p. 86.

supervision parents can effectively use structured training programs with their children.<sup>1</sup>

In her study involving learning disabled kindergarten children with thirty-three mothers participating and thirty-four controls Slater reported the results from a nine month parent involvement program in perceptual training. The pretest/posttest results on the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt, human figure drawings, and the Metropolitan Readiness revealed that on all three the experimental group scored better. However, only the Bender scores were significantly higher when the Mann-Whitney U. Test was applied. Slater felt that the results of the study were promising considering the somewhat limited, short-term parent involvement. She stated, "Although only one measure significantly differentiated between the participating and nonparticipating groups, all participating groups performed slightly better than nonparticipating groups."<sup>2</sup>

Keele and Harrison compared the effectiveness of structured tutoring techniques as used by parents and paid tutors in teaching basic reading skills. They found no significant differences between the children who were

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<sup>1</sup>John Courtney Abbott, "A Study of Visual Perceptual Programming Administered by Mothers," (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1971), Dissertation Abstracts International, XXXII A (May-June, 1972), p. 6177A.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara R. Slater, "Parent Involvement in Perceptual Training at the Kindergarten Level," Academic Therapy, VII (Winter, 1971-1972), p. 153.

tutored by the paid tutors and those tutored by parents. They concluded that for kindergarten and first grade children structured tutoring by adults is an effective means for providing reading readiness and remedial work.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, in her study using twenty-six second graders and their parents, Murray assessed the efficacy of parents given short-term specialized training and supervision to assist in their child's academic learning. Based on the difference in gain scores and learning rate on the reading instruments employed, Murray concluded that some parents can be good remedial resources for their children's learning disability.<sup>2</sup>

In follow-up studies on thirty-six dyslexic children ranging from five to eighteen years of age Worden and Snyder reported that prior to referral thirty-four of these children had previously been tutored at home and "...in thirty of these cases, the home tutoring had been totally unsuccessful in producing improvement in reading skill and probably harmful in that it led to anger, frustration, friction, negativism, loss of motivation, and considerable

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<sup>1</sup>Reba Keele and Grant W. Harrison, "A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Structured Tutoring Techniques as Used by Parents and Paid Student Tutors in Teaching Basic Reading Skills" (paper presented to the California Educational Research Association, San Diego, California, April 29-30, 1971, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Beulah B. Murray, "Individual Amelioration of Learning Disability through Parent-Helper-Pupil Involvement," Austin Peay State University, Clarkville, Tennessee, April, 1972, p. 21.



family disorganization and conflict."<sup>1</sup> They concluded, "It appears to us that tutoring by parents has a negligible place in the therapy of childhood dyslexia and in many cases becomes a very unpleasant and unsuccessful experience for the child and the parents."<sup>2</sup>

In his unpublished Ed.D. dissertation Baker evaluated three different kinds of instructional treatments for forty-eight learning disabled children in grades two through five. Treatments included group instruction, individual tutoring, and counseling of the mother and the child in separate sessions. Baker subdivided the experimental group to determine the effects of mother counseling, play therapy, and a combination of the two on the child's performance in the group instruction class and the tutoring session. Measures of change and improvement were noted in the cognitive, affective, and environmental and psychomotor areas.

The results of this study revealed that group instruction is more effective than tutoring in improving academic performance. When parental counseling and the play therapy were added to group instruction an improvement in academic performance was noted at the 5% level of significance and a significant improvement was revealed on the

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<sup>1</sup>Don K. Worden and Russel D. Snyder, "Parental Tutoring in Childhood Dyslexia," Journal of Learning Disabilities, II (September, 1969), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

psychomotor intelligence test scores. The tutoring treatment alone was found to be the least effective remedial program. Greater improvement in achievement and test performance was found for those in the tutoring group when it included play therapy with the child, or counseling with the mother, or a combination of the two. It was also found that when any of the three counseling programs was added to the tutoring method there was a significant improvement in the parent's attitude toward the child, the child's achievement factors, and the adjustment pattern between parent and child. It was concluded that a high quality counseling program for parents or a combination of parent counseling and play therapy are both effective methods of treating learning disabilities in children. Furthermore, tutoring by itself is the least effective form of remediation.<sup>1</sup>

Neither Barsch or Kronick recommend parents as tutors for their learning disabled children. Kronick states,

Generally speaking, it is preferable for parents themselves to avoid tutoring the child. They tend to be too anxious for the child to succeed and to react too subjectively to frustration and other behaviorisms.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding parent tutors Barsch has stated,

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce E. Baker, "The Effectiveness of Parental Counseling with Other Modalities in the Treatment of Children with Learning Disabilities," (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation), reviewed by John V. Gilmore, Journal of Education, CLIV (October, 1971), p. 78-79.

<sup>2</sup>Kronick, They Too Can Succeed, p. 72.

During the past twenty years we have had occasion to discuss this particular role of 'auxiliary teacher' with several thousand individual parents of special children.... Only a small percentage were able to approach the task and sustain the effort comfortably and efficiently.<sup>1</sup>

Barsch views parents not as academic tutors but as childrearers with a unique position to reinforce in everyday living situations the academics of the classroom. However, in his 1968 study on childrearing practices of five different disability populations--deaf, blind, mongoloid, cerebral palsy and organic--Barsch found that parents tended to use the same childrearing methods and techniques with their handicapped child that they used with their nonhandicapped child. Furthermore, little evidence was revealed to indicate that the special educational problems of the child which are the very basis for individualization and prescriptive teaching in the classroom were given consideration in the structuring of childrearing practices in the home. "Comparatively few parents significantly modified their rearing practices in conformity to the nature of the special child's perceptual, language, or emotional problems."<sup>2</sup>

Barsch believes parents must be helped to recognize three essential facts:

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

- 1) the dynamic learner is the same learner in the classroom and the home in spite of differences in content and response,
- 2) the terminology which the professional would employ to characterize the learning difficulties of the child is not simply a description of his problems in the classroom but has equal application to his learning in the home,
- 3) the parent has a definite role to play in the child's school learning in association with the professionally trained teacher.<sup>1</sup>

Barsch suggests that educators "...study the dynamics of childrearing to discover the many ways the parent can incorporate sound and established principles of learning into the day by day family process of shaping behavior."<sup>2</sup> He regards childrearing to be an important instructional process and advocates finding parental methods of childrearing which are compatible with classroom instruction "...as a reciprocal interweaving of two instructional methodologies seeking to simultaneously serve the learner. The parent conducts a curriculum called childrearing. The teacher conducts a curriculum called academics, language development, or perceptual training."<sup>3</sup>

#### Summary

At the present time the research and literature

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

on parent involvement programs for the learning disabled child have concentrated on parental tutoring. The controversial status of parental tutoring is clearly established. Although regarded as an effective means of remediation by some writers, parent tutoring is strongly opposed by others. As yet the degree and means by which parent tutoring can be successfully implemented has not been established. However, it has been suggested that the effectiveness of the tutoring approach can be increased when coupled with some form of counseling for the parent, the child, or both.

Conditions Causing Difficulty  
in Parent Involvement

In attempting to identify types of families which are likely to encounter difficulties in implementing a home program for their learning disabled child Neifert and Gayton have suggested the following family groups:

- 1) the family in which the mother feels that **something is wrong with the child but receives little or no support for her views from the father,**
- 2) the family in which a power struggle exists **between the mother and child,**
- 3) the family faced with multiple problems-- **marital, financial, and/or health,**
- 4) the family with a large number of children.<sup>1</sup>

Barsch also speaks of other demands of the household and family or what he calls reality of family living as well as lack of adequate patience as reasons for

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<sup>1</sup>Neifert and Gayton, "Home Program Approach," p. 86-88.

ineffectiveness of parent tutors.<sup>1</sup> However, in commenting on the lack of success of many parent involvement programs Karnes moves the emphasis away from the family structure and states, "Two basic factors seem to be associate with this lack of success--attitudes of professional personnel and their lack of skills in working with parents. These two factors are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to determine cause and effect relationships."<sup>2</sup> Barsch adds his support to these statements by suggesting that "too many professional specialists give parents the feeling that they have little time to discuss the child's problems with them, communicate in a technical jargon that effectively confuses and overwhelms the parents, and generally show little or no interest in the personal problems of the parents."<sup>3</sup> He continues, "The teacher has been influenced to regard the parent negatively and the parent has been influenced to regard the teacher positively. This cultural oriented bias is at the root of many of the prosaic dilemmas which are experienced in the day-by-day conduct of special education."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 57-59.

<sup>2</sup>Merle B. Karnes, R. Reid Zehrbach, and James A. Teska, "Involving Families of Handicapped Children," Theory Into Practice, XI (June, 1972), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup>Ray H. Barsch, "Counseling the Parent of the Brain-Damaged Child," Journal of Rehabilitation, XXVII (May-June, 1961), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 9.

### Summary

The literature suggests that certain parents are less successful than others in implementing home programs for their learning disabled child. Determining factors appear to include the father's attitude, the nature of the mother-child relationship, family size, and the presence or absence of other family problems. The attitude of professionals and their lack of skill in working with parents are also considered contributory.

### Criteria for Successful Parent Involvement

From the preceding discussion regarding conditions which cause difficulties in parent involvement programs it appears obvious that the opposite of these conditions would provide for a potentially more successful involvement. Thus, the following factors may be considered related to the success of parent programs: 1) parent agreement on the necessity of a home program including a good mother-child relationship, 2) interest and involvement on the part of the father, and 3) smaller families which are free from other pressing family problems.<sup>1</sup>

The uniqueness of each family unit points to the necessity of considering the needs of each family when planning for parent involvement. However, there are certain key provisions which appear essential for all parents who

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<sup>1</sup>Neifert and Gayton, "Home Program Approach," p. 34.

desire to aid in the education of their learning disabled child. These included:

- 1) understanding the individual child's disability,
- 2) providing loving firmness,
- 3) structuring the environment,
- 4) setting good examples and high standards, and
- 5) providing opportunities to succeed, to build self-esteem, and to feel wanted.<sup>1</sup>

Flexibility is also considered a necessity in successful parent programming. "Since any program to involve family members must be flexible, the model that helps professionals develop plans and procedures for meeting the needs of family members with highly individual sets of problems must also be flexible."<sup>2</sup> With this flexibility there must be a sensitivity to the individual needs of the parents. "Those who work with the parents should be able to vicariously experience the strengths and nature of their frustrations while at the same time structuring the relationship so as to facilitate change in parent attitudes and practices."<sup>3</sup>

Barsch, a pioneer in the parent involvement movement, also recognizes the potential value of counseling as a means of increasing the success of parent involvement programs. On the basis of his seven-year experiment in

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Brown, "Suggestions for Parents," Journal of Learning Disabilities, XXI (February, 1969), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Karnes, Zehrbach, and Teska, "Handicapped Children," p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Barsch, "Counseling the Parent," p. 26.



group counseling with thirty-eight groups of mothers of brain-damaged children Barsch has made the following observations:

- 1) A counseling technique to help parents develop experimental approaches to behavior organization in their brain-injured child is ego-strengthening, supportive, and practically helpful.
- 2) These parents experience a homogeneity of anxieties stemming from apprehension regarding the psychological and educational development of their children. Only on a secondary basis do they appear to concern themselves with factors in physical development.
- 3) A selection process is necessary to determine whether the needs of a particular parent might best be served in a group or individual counseling setting or whether referral for psychotherapy might be more profitable.
- 4) The parent of the brain-injured child must be considered an integral part of the organization of the child's behavior.
- 5) Parents can be taught to perceive their children differently and learn to deal with their children's problems more effectively.
- 6) Comments of the mothers consistently reflect changed response patterns in relation to problems represented by their children; they learn to apply a technique. There is some restoration of feelings of competency and self-worth.
- 7) The mothers learn to recognize their unique responsibility in developing organized response patterns in their children.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the success of parent involvement programs appears to be related to the degree of cooperation and communication between all persons involved. "The child can be helped only if the responsible adults around him are able to come to terms with his deficits on the basis of a

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, "Counseling the Parent," p. 42.

realistic recognition of not only his weaknesses but his strengths as well."<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The importance of the family in the remediation of the child with learning disabilities is emphasized. The need for the professional to recognize the uniqueness of each family unit, to provide program flexibility to meet the specific needs of each participating family, and to cooperate and communicate among each other and with the parents is stressed. The potential value of counseling is once again pointed out.

### Implications for the Teacher/Professional

The literature suggests that the teacher must take a more active role in working with the parents of the learning disabled child. They must recognize that "...professional help for the child is also help for the parents. It clears up many of their misgivings and enables them to respond adequately to the child's needs."<sup>2</sup>

The teacher must communicate more openly with the parents and foster a more cooperative approach in the parent/teacher relationship. "Instead of regarding the parent as an adversary, the teacher must come to regard

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<sup>1</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Management, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, Strauss, Lehtinen, The Other Child, p. 10.

the parent as an associate and an ally."<sup>1</sup> She "...must recognize that many parents are already doing 'the right thing'."<sup>2</sup>

Basic to improvement in the parent/teacher relationship and, thus, equally important is the fostering of greater communication and cooperation between the various professionals involved with the learning disabled child and his family. The teacher will play a vital role in devising and implementing parent involvement programs based on the coordinated efforts of the various professionals involved in the learning disabilities program.

In summarizing the implications that have been made for the teacher/professional the following statement by Ray Barsch seems to say it all:

Every professional recognizes the important role which a parent can play in the child's learning. It is no longer of practical value to assign parents to a waiting room status and furnish them with periodic achievement reports. They must become a dynamic ally to their child's development. To achieve<sup>3</sup> this alliance, the teacher must make the blueprint.

#### Summary

Parents and educators alike are striving to provide programs to aid the learning disabled child. As yet, such

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, "Parents as Teachers," p. 149.

<sup>3</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 95.

services are in short supply. To ease this shortage and in hopes of capitalizing on the powerful influence parents have in working with their child parent involvement programs have been implemented. Basically, these programs have involved parent tutoring. The literature and research on these tutoring programs is inconclusive, although some degree of success has been reported. The dynamics of the family structure in the successful implementation of involvement programs is being recognized as is the potential role of counseling in the success of these programs. Both factors have implications for the teacher who must assume an active and positive role in the structuring of future trends in parent involvement.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

#### Implications for the Future

Some day in the future, the world of special education may come to the full realization that educational growth of the special child resides in a matrix of teaching and learning interwoven in a reciprocating pattern among the child, his teacher, and his parents. Studying each in isolation automatically limits the full picture.<sup>1</sup>

Based on individual family practices and needs the teacher will be required to aid in devising and implementing programs which will more effectively involve parents in the education of their learning disabled child. Because the teacher will play a prime role in determining the scope and content of these programs universities must incorporate into their programs courses which will equip the teacher with those skills necessary to more effectively communicate and work with the parents of these children.

Counseling has frequently been mentioned in reference to parent involvement programs and points out the need for continued and greater cooperation between the various disciplines--education and psychology--in working with the learning disabled child. Furthermore, research into the role

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 52.

counseling plays in the learning disabilities program is warranted.

The parent involvement issue is not resolved, but the fact that it is an issue is heartening. The parent's role is recognized if not utilized and that in itself provides hope for the future. The following challenge is offered to the professional dedicated to helping promote increased services for the learning disabled child:

As I travel across North America I encounter, time and time again, parents who, instinctively, have evolved beautiful methods of reaching their children. Some are university graduates, and some have little education. Imagine the additional number of parents who could do as well, if only provided with direction!<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary

Parent involvement in the education of the learning disabled child warrants continued research. Adequate involvement programs have not yet been devised, nor have guidelines and objectives been established to aid the parent in living and working with their learning disabled child. The issue of parent involvement in the remediation of the learning disabled child is in its infancy but through the efforts of dedicated parents and educators it will grow and hopefully blossom into a means of meeting the total, twenty-four hours needs of the learning disabled child.

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<sup>1</sup>Kronick, "To Whom Does He Belong," p. 72.

The following quotation seems to beautifully summarize the entire issue of parent involvement in the education of the learning disabled child:

...in the final analysis a child needs his home and family more than he needs his teachers or his therapist. Providing the parents with information about their child's difficulties, about understanding their own problems in dealing with him, and on-going support and about direct advice handling situations with him, does much to strengthen their participation in the remedial program. The extent to which parents can become involved in helping their child to develop to his full potential varies. When a professional neglects parents altogether, he reinforces their helpless feelings, he encourages dependency on others and above all, he misses a vital source of help for the child.<sup>1</sup>

#### Concluding Remarks

For both parents and professionals dedicated to helping the learning disabled child reach his fullest potential the following advice seems most appropriate:

...let us not allow our sense of urgency to move us to desperation, nor our temporary failures to lead to despair. A handicap is overcome one day at a time. If we fret too much about what we haven't done in years past and worry too much about what the child will be able to do in the years to come, we will miss the little opportunities to admire what he did today and give him the thing he needs most--confidence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Management, p. 99-100.

<sup>2</sup>Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, Meeting Total Needs, p. 24.

As the parent involvement issue is debated and future research is conducted the following statement by Ray Barsch may certainly come true:

Perhaps the child with learning disabilities with all of the vagueness he has generated, may become the principle energizing force for placing the parent of the special child in a foreground companionship with the teacher, and thereby stimulating the development of a more intelligent involvement of the parent in the educational process.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barsch, The Parent Teacher Partnership, p. 5.



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