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massive staff development program may be needed to enable teachers to assume control over their professional growth and to acquire the new knowledge and instructional skills needed for the improvement of reading comprehension and evaluation of written materials.

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TEACHER OPINIONS OF PARENTAL READING INSTRUCTION

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There have been many indications in recent years that the opinions of professional educators regarding parental teaching are undergoing radical changes. Not that many years ago parents were likely to receive a clear "hands off!" message from the professional community as far as "meddling" in their children's formal education was concerned. One researcher (Durkin, 1966), in fact, found a major reason for parents' not having taught their preschool children resided in their awareness of teacher disapproval of the practice. Today the IRA has a special committee designed to foster parental involvement in early reading; television and bumper sticker campaigns abound persuading parents to read to their children; federal legislation such as PL 94-142 and Title I have

insured parental entry into the educational process via participation in IEPs and parental advisory boards; local school districts are increasingly offering workshops designed to teach parents how to teach their children; and the list goes on.

Parents for their part seem equally eager to engage in both preschool and supplementary instruction. Publications teaching parents how to instruct their children have enjoyed great popularity (Brzenski & Driscoll, 1971; Rich & Jones, 1978; Cassidy & Vukelich, 1978) while a recent survey (Cassidy, 1977) has indicated that means of helping their children read is the most important piece of information that parents want from the school about their child's reading ability. Furthermore, polls indicate that parents

would actually be willing to suffer an increase in taxes to obtain such information (Gallup, 1976).

What about classroom teachers, however? Have they really changed their minds about direct parental teaching of children or do they see the above-mentioned movement as only the latest in a long line of educational fads perpetrated by a relatively few individuals? Although some evidence exists suggesting the former (e.g. Jackson & Stretch, 1976; Tudor, 1977) very little empirical evidence exists concerning teachers' opinions regarding parental infringement upon what was previously considered their exclusive turf. Certainly if classroom teachers do not favor more direct parental involvement the movement presently on foot to foster it has very little chance.

The present study was designed to sample teacher opinions concerning this matter. Specifically teachers' opinions were solicited regarding 1) the overall desirability of direct parental involvement in education, followed by their perceptions of 2) the specific methods by which this involvement would be manifested, and 3) their probable effects upon the children involved.

THE SURVEY

Elementary school teachers from four mid-Atlantic school districts were sent a questionnaire designed to solicit their opinions regarding the role of parental involvement in the teaching of reading. Three hundred and four teachers, or slightly over 50% of the total sample, returned their questionnaires, with the typical respondent having taught for ten years, having completed at least 30 hours of graduate education, and currently teaching a self-contained primary grade comprised of lower-middle SES children.

Over 96% believed that parents should take a more active role in the education of their children, with 82% believing that they could be trained to administer supplementary instruction effectively after their children had started school.

When asked what types of instruction a parent could be trained to administer effectively, the teachers were somewhat more divided in their opinions. As indicated by Table 1, however, the majority con-

TABLE 1
APPROPRIATE TOPICS FOR
PARENTAL INSTRUCTION

QUESTION: What kinds of reading help do you think parents could administer effectively if trained?

Percent	Activity
83%	1. Prepare the child to want to learn.
86%	2. Play learning games and activities with the child.
89%	3. Read to child.
42%	4. Teach child words and phrases while reading to him.
69%	5. Teach letters.
49%	6. Teach letter sounds.
44%	7. Teach a sight vocabulary
40%	8. All types of reading activities.
-1%	9. Parents should not do any of the above.

sidered reading to children, playing learning games with them, and preparing the child to want to learn as appropriate for parents, but were less sure of parental effectiveness with some of the more specific skills. It is interesting to note, however, that 40% of the sample believed

parents could be trained to administer all types of reading instruction effectively, and fewer than 1% believed that parents should do none of the listed activities.

Given that most teachers do agree that parents could be trained to teach both their preschool and schoolage children, one important question remains: What do teachers see as the most likely end product of this instruction? Specifically, do teachers see a lack of direct parental involvement as playing a role in the failure of children to achieve as highly as they should, and if so, how much would both preschool and extra-school instruction be likely to profit the average child?

As indicated in Table 2, 94% of the teachers believed that a lack of

TABLE 3
LIKELY OUTCOMES OF
PARENTAL INSTRUCTION

QUESTION: Do you think lack of direct parental involvement plays any role in the failure of those children who fail to achieve up to their potential?

94% - Yes
6% - No

QUESTION: In terms of grade equivalency, how much do you think a year's initial reading tutoring (administered by a trained parent) would aid the average child?

Percent	Outcome
3%	1. The child would be over a year's grade equivalent higher by the end of first grade.
15%	2. The child would be close to a year ahead by the end of first grade.
76%	3. Close to half a year ahead.
4%	4. Initial tutoring wouldn't help at all.
2%	5. Initial tutoring would actually be detrimental.

QUESTION: In terms of grade equivalency, how much do you think 30 minutes of supplementary instruction (administered after the child has started school) per night would benefit the average child?

Percent	Outcome
14%	1. Child would be over a year ahead by sixth grade.
33%	2. Child would be close to a year ahead by sixth grade.
51%	3. Close to a half year ahead.
4%	4. Supplementary instruction wouldn't help at all.
2%	5. Supplementary instruction would actually be detrimental.

direct parental involvement did have an adverse role with respect to student achievement, and an equal number believed that both preschool and extra-school parental instruction would result in at least a half year's increase in grade equivalency.

DISCUSSION

The above results strongly suggest that the movement within the reading profession to foster increased teaching by parents of their children has the support of the classroom teacher, without which the movement would be almost certainly doomed. The surveyed teachers 1) saw a definite place for parental instruction in the schooling process, 2) believed that most parents could be effectively trained to administer many important types of reading instruction, and 3) believed that this instruction, if administered, would result in substantive achievement gains on the part of the children involved. If these opinions are widely held among teachers in other parts of the country, then they augur well for what may be the most important educational movement of our times.

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Reading is. . .

it is what man
made because we
could write letters and
we wouldn't have to talk
to tell somebody something.

— Elizabeth

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES:

Putting Basic and Applied Research in Context

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An examination of research processes and their educational implications can be logically based upon a discussion of the purpose of educational research. This fundamental question has a number of answers, answers which have implications for divergent schools of thought regarding the nature of effective research.

Button (1977) states that "the only purpose of educational research as such is improvement of schooling." (p.243) This viewpoint is in keeping with the tenets of American pragmatism which see knowledge as the path to improvement, the path to change. Such improvement, however, is further defined by Button as:

- a. alternative approaches to instruction and curriculum,
- b. the basis of changing organizational patterns and policies,
- c. the basis for better questions,
- d. fresh perspectives of schools.

This is the popular consensus regarding the purpose of research. It is typically promoted by government funding agencies, classroom teachers, school administrators, and practitioners in general.

In marked contrast, Kerlinger (1977) argues that the basic purpose of research is to produce theory. It is only through theory, says Kerlinger, that we can understand and explain the phenomena which are around us.

This is the view of the researcher with little direct connection with educational practice.

This column will extend these dichotomous views of educational research to an examination of the difference between basic and applied research and their potential for creating an impact on classroom instruction. The thesis here is that basic and applied research exist on a continuum which is not related to the degree of resulting educational change. The influence of research is more dependent upon other characteristics, such as social values and credibility.

Shaver (1979) describes these two types of research. Basic scientific research has the goal of knowledge and theory generation. The person conducting this type of research is not primarily concerned with practical consequences or moral implications. On the other hand, applied research seeks to explain and understand teaching and education. "Here validity of practice is tested with the hope that results will be generalizable beyond the specific setting of the study and sometimes, even directly applicable to theory building." (p. 4)

Both basic and applied educational research have implications for changes in classrooms. Kerlinger's (1977) position is that because basic research is *not* tied to a particular problem situation it will ultimately

have more far-reaching effects than applied research. The results can be generalized to a wide range of situations. He cites the field of reading as an example:

Answers to reading problems lie not in many researches aimed at telling teachers how to teach reading. They lie in research aimed at understanding the many aspects of human learning and teaching connected with reading....We must study reading in the context of perception, motivation, attitudes, values, intelligence, and so on. (p. 7)

Extending this approach, applied research has, by definition, a more limited impact than basic research. Findings would apply to elementary classrooms, or perhaps to an even more limited setting, such as urban lower elementary teaching situations. This is not to say, however, that applied research is less useful; simply that the role is different. For example, one instance of applied research would be to test a method of teaching reading. The research would tell something about this method; but, in addition, if the research were properly drawn from a theory, the findings could also test the theory itself. Shaver (1979) suggests that applied research findings

...do, at the least, suggest boundaries of generalizations. The delimitation of applicability can be as important as theory confirmation to those who want to use research evidence to make decisions about practice in the schools. (p. 5)