AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Judith E. Kieff for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Education presented on May 25, 1990

Title: Preference for School Involvement Strategies
by Mothers of At-Risk and Peer-Model Kindergarten
Children

Redacted for Privacy

Abstract approved: _____
              Dr. JoAnn Brewer

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe
the attitudes and preferences regarding home/school
involvement strategies of 23 mothers of kindergarten
students who had been identified as at-risk for failure in
school and 18 mothers of kindergarten students who had been
designated as peer models.

Data were collected through semi-structured
interviews. Chi square and t-tests were used at the .05
level to determine if there were significant differences
between the responses of the two groups.

Respondents were asked to express their preferences for
programs and services designed to support families,
potential use of these programs and services, views
concerning the importance of different home/school
involvement strategies, comfort level with different
home/school involvement strategies, preferences for topics
for parent education, and preferences for ways of learning
about helping their children.

A significant difference was found between the two groups regarding potential use of programs and services, views concerning the importance of different home/school involvement strategies, and preferences for ways of learning about their children. Mothers of at-risk students favored one-way communication with schools and strategies that were not social in nature. Mothers of at-risk students showed an interest in parent education topics which discussed general development and family maintenance over discipline.

The mean age at the birth of the first child for mothers of at-risk students was 19.4 years while the mean age at the birth of the first child of mothers of peer model students was 24.3 years.

Preference for School Involvement Strategies
by Mothers of At-Risk
and Peer-Model Kindergarten Children

by

Judith E. Kieff

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Education

Completed May 25, 1990

Commencement June 1991

APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Chairman of Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Redacted for Privacy

_____
Dean of College of Education

Redacted for Privacy
_____
Dean of Graduate School

Date thesis is presented _____ May 25, 1990 _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

PREFERENCE FOR SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES BY MOTHERS OF AT-RISK AND PEER-MODEL KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parent involvement is a key element in effective schools (Becher, 1984; Henderson, 1987; Moles, 1982). Children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with schools score higher on achievement tests than children of similar abilities and family backgrounds whose parents have not established such partnerships with the schools (Henderson, 1987). Thus, research shows that parent involvement is an essential component of effective schools, but this research does not establish the kinds of involvement necessary to increase student achievement.

The problem of getting parents involved in activities which promote home/school partnerships can be more difficult with families of children who are designated as at-risk for school failure. For these children, certain characteristics in their family backgrounds (such as low income, very young or undereducated parents, or family dysfunction) target them for intervention programs aimed at preventing the possibility of failure in school (Bermudez, and Pardon, 1985). One of the key components of successful intervention

programs is the involvement of parents, yet the parents of at-risk children often have a difficult time communicating with schools and teachers (Powell, 1988). This difficulty may be due to the parents' own lack of success in school, feelings of helplessness or ineffectiveness in teaching or guiding their own children, general stress, or other unknown causes. Finding strategies that will empower these parents as resources for and partners in their children's education will improve both the rate at which the children achieve and the effectiveness of the schools they attend.

The purpose of this study was to interview mothers of kindergarten students designated as being at-risk for failure in school and mothers of kindergarten students designated as being peer-models. The interview was intended to

1)   describe common factors and attitudes among mothers which influence participation in their children's formal school education;

2)   describe how mothers view their own importance and abilities to positively affect their children's success through participation in various school and home activities;

3)   describe what information, skills and resources mothers feel they need in order to feel more effective as partners in the education of their children; and

4) describe how mothers prefer to learn about how they can help their children.

Statement of Problem

Research indicates that parents' involvement in the education of their children increases children's achievement and the schools' effectiveness. Teachers and administrators observe that some parents are readily involved in their children's education but that many parents are not. To encourage all parents to be involved in education, it is necessary to create diverse strategies which utilize both school and community resources. In order to create effective strategies, parent educators and school personnel need to know how parents view the importance of being involved in their children's education, and what resources, skills, and information they need in order to become more effective partners in education. Therefore, the intent of this study is to describe the difference between mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer-model students regarding their preferences for home/school involvement activities.

Variables

The independent variable in this study was the designation of kindergarten students as being at-risk for failure in school. This designation was made by school

district personnel after testing and interviewing potential kindergarten children. Students having a high number of risk factors that would indicate a possibility of future school failure were designated at-risk.

The dependent variables in this study were responses given by the mothers at a forty-five minute interview conducted by the researcher. The following variables were tested to determine if there was a significant difference:

1) the mother's age at birth of first child,

2) the mother's preference towards programs which she felt would be useful in supporting families,

3) the mother's indication of potential use of programs and services designed to support families,

4) the mother's attitude about the importance of different home/school involvement strategies,

5) the mother's comfort level with different involvement strategies,

6) the mother's preference for topics for parent education programs, and

7) the mother's preference for different learning strategies.

The following variables were explored to see if they warrant further investigation:

1) the mother's highest educational level,

2) the mother's attitude toward visiting school,

3) the mother's attitude toward the qualities of a
good teacher for her child,

4) the mother's memories of her own elementary school
experience,

5) the mother's greatest fear for her child's
experience in school, and

6) the mother's expectations for her child's success
in school.

Research Hypothesis

H_o There will be no significant difference between
mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer
model students regarding:

a.   age of mother at birth of first child,

b.   preferences for programs and services they see as
effective in supporting families,

c.   potential use of programs and services designed to
support families,

d.   views of the importance of different home/school
involvement strategies,

e.   comfort level with certain home/school involvement
strategies,

f.   preference for topics for parent education, or

g.   preference for learning about helping their
children.

Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1) that schools use similar criteria in grouping children,

2) that the sample represents the population of mothers of at-risk students as well as the population of mothers of peer-model students within the Corvallis Public School District, 509 J.

3) that all mothers will respond honestly regarding their feelings toward attitudinal statements during data collection,

4) that attitudes are indicators of important behaviors.

Limitations of Study

There were four major limitations in this study. The first was a small sample size and the lack of randomness of the sample. This study surveyed parents involved in a particular program. The initial intention of this study was to interview the total population of mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer model students enrolled in the full-day kindergarten program.

The second limitation was that this program had been in existence for five months prior to the time the interviews were conducted. Therefore, the philosophies of this program and the activities already conducted by the teachers may

have had an effect on the attitudes and opinions expressed by the respondents.

The third limitation is common to all survey research. Open-ended questions and attitude scales are self-report measures and, therefore, the researcher can never be sure of the degree to which the response of the subject reflects the participant's actual attitude (Borg and Gall, 1989).

The fourth limitation involves the use of multiple tests to determine if there were statistically significant differences. This research compared two groups on many variables, and each comparison required a separate t-test or chi square test. As the number of tests increased so did the risk of Type I error - finding a significant difference where none actually existed.

Definition of Terms

At-Risk Youth:

This study used the definition of at-risk youth as outlined by the Corvallis Oregon School District in Youth At Risk Report (1989a):

> One who demonstrates characteristics which
> contribute to the probability of leaving
> school prior to high school graduation.
> These characteristics include:
> - low self-esteem (avoid, give up, don't finish);
> - high absentee rate, tardiness;
> - passive, not involved;
> - attention-getting behaviors;
> - falling behind in skills;
> - externalizing behaviors;
> - learning style as a source of discouragement;
> - fragile home situation;

- poor coping skills;
- parents have similar characteristics (often discouraged learners, have limited resources and experiences) (p.4).

Peer-Models:

Peer-models are students enrolled in a program, who have no known academic or social problems.

Home/School Involvement Strategies:

Home/school involvement strategies are defined as programs or strategies used by parents or by school districts to enhance the partner/relationship between parents and schools. The purpose of these strategies is to support children's efforts to succeed in school. Strategies include

- parent-teacher conferences,

- parents helping children with homework,

- schools holding open house or other parent programs,

- parent education classes,

- parents volunteering in the classroom.

Attitude:

An attitude is the predisposition of an individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of the world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. Attitudes include affective (feelings), cognitive (knowing), and behavior (doing) components (Borg and Gall, 1989).

Likert-type scale:

The Likert-type scale is a scale used for measuring attitudes based on the research of Renis Likert. The individual subject is presented a continuous scale measuring the attitude in question from the strongest point of feeling to the weakest point of feeling. Individuals then check a point on the line which corresponds to their own attitude.

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

Parent-teacher conferences are regularly scheduled discussions between parent(s) and teacher regarding the general progress of the child in school. Teachers have a preplanned agenda for these discussions.

Child Care During Conferences:

This is a service provided by the school, within the school, and free to parents during scheduled conferences.

Newsletters:

Newsletters are form letters, mailed regularly from the principal, outlining events and happenings at school.

Parent Volunteer Programs:

Parent volunteer programs consist of opportunities for parents to help within the school, either in a classroom, cafeteria, library, playground, or office.

Parent Advisory Committee:

This is a formal meeting among parents, teachers, and principals. The purpose of the advisory committee is to

provide input and feedback regarding solutions to school issues or problems.

Parent Resource Room:

The parent resource room is a room in the school building specifically for parents. It is a place where parents can meet or wait for their children. Parenting resources, as well as resources for making home-learning activities, are available.

Parent Support Groups:

Parent support groups are groups of parents who meet regularly to discuss parenting concerns and issues. Information about the meeting place and time is provided by school; however, school personnel do not host these meetings.

Single Parent Support Groups:

This is a support group specifically for single parents.

Home Visits:

Home visits are teachers visiting parents and children in the home. One purpose for a home visit is for the teacher to provide parents with ideas for working with their children.

Parent Education Workshops:

Designed to discuss specific parenting issues, parent education workshops are two hour presentations held in the school but not necessarily led by school personnel.

Parent-Teacher Organization:

The parent-teacher organization is a formalized group of parents and teachers who meet together on a regular basis to discuss general issues concerning children and schools.

Activity Guides:

An activity guide is a packet, prepared by the teacher, of suggested ideas and activities designed to reinforce (during holiday breaks and summers) what children are learning in schools.

Parent Education Classes:

Parent education classes are a series of five or six meetings centering on specific parenting issues or topics. Classes can be held in the school but are not necessarily facilitated by school personnel.

After School Programs for Children Whose Parents Work:

These are programs held in the school between 3 and 6 p.m. during the weekdays. The programs are held in the school but are not necessarily funded by the school.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature provides an overview of the current knowledge regarding the effects of parent involvement on a child's education. The review is divided into three sections. The first section describes the importance of parent involvement in early educational interventions; the second section outlines what is known about the influence of parent involvement on the effectiveness of schools; and the third section reviews what is currently known about the barriers to parent involvement in schools.

Early Intervention Studies

During the 1960s, the social climate of the nation mandated an effort to provide equal opportunity for all citizens. One reflection of this effort was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In order to investigate the effects of segregation on educational achievement, a comprehensive national survey of 645,000 students in 4000 schools was ordered. Coleman and his colleagues (1966) found that school factors such as class size or teacher education had little effect on student achievement. What was found to be the critical factor to student achievement was the students' attitudes toward themselves and their feelings of control

over the environment. These attitudes are formed in the
home and are the product of many interactions between
parents, children and the surrounding community
(Coleman et al, 1966).

Continued interest in explaining both the issue of
inequality in the United States and the various impacts that
family and schooling have on later financial and
occupational achievement led Jencks (1972) and his
colleagues to study factors which contribute to success in
schools. Variables analyzed included family background,
socio-economic status, racial effects, and school equality.
The researchers found that schools alone cannot affect the
child's achievement. "Family background explains nearly
half of the variation in educational attainment" (Jencks et
al, 1972, p.143). Important variables of family background
included the home's effective support of education, number
of children in the family, and parent's educational level.

Educational Intervention Programs

Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) established the idea
that performance in school was influenced by home
environments. These reports, along with the national mood
of the mid-1960s supporting equal rights and opportunities,
propelled the country to respond to the needs of the poor
and disadvantaged by establishing intervention programs.

These experimental programs were designed to show the impact that environment has on the intellectual development of young children. It was thought that educational intervention with economically disadvantaged young children would give them advantages in developing intellectual skills. Since the home environment was recognized as important, many programs were designed to include parents.

In the summer of 1965, as a part of the War on Poverty, the first Head Start Programs were implemented. The project had two major objectives: the child would benefit from an enriched early education program, and the parents would be included as an important part of the program as aides, advisory council members, or paraprofessional members of the team. However, each program was developed independently of the others and differed according to children's ages, the curricula involved, the duration of the program, and the amount and type of parent involvement. The question of whether these programs would result in sustained intellectual development could not be answered at the time.

Research conducted in the 1960s reported mixed results regarding gains in intellectual development by the children enrolled in these intervention programs. Some programs reported startling intellectual gains for children while they were enrolled (Caldwell, 1968, Weikart and Lambie, 1968). However, follow-up studies on the same children indicated no sustained intellectual gain for program

participants (Westinghouse & the Ohio State University,
1969). Therefore, although intellectual gains could be
shown while children were enrolled in intervention programs,
these gains "washed out" after intervention ended.

In 1975, longitudinal research began to determine what
advantages were gained from educational intervention.
Eleven programs were studied. Gains were not to be
determined only by improvement in intellectual performance;
reduction in special education placement and improvement in
a family's ability to cope were also to be considered as
indicators of successful programs.

Researchers found that intervention programs during
early childhood positively affected these five areas:
1. Ability in early to middle childhood

    a. Scores improved on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence
       Test.

    b. Scores improved on achievement tests.
2. Greater school competency in the middle to adolescent
years

    a. Special education placements were reduced.

    b. There was less grade retention.
3. Improved attitude toward achievement in adolescence

    a. Mother and child had higher occupational
aspirations.

b. The self evaluations of school performance were
higher.

4. Educational attainment

    a. There was a higher high school completion rate
between the students who had been enrolled in
intervention programs and equally competent   students.

    b. Students who had been enrolled in intervention
programs had higher expectations for completing
high school and attending college.

5. Occupational attainment

    a. Employment/school competence increased.

    b. Occupational aspiration was higher.

(Royce, J.M., Darlington, R. B., and Murrary, H.W., 1983).

In a comprehensive discussion of the longitudinal
research, Lazar (1983) summarized two important points.
First, good early childhood programs pay off in two ways: in
benefits for the child's development and in financial
savings as a result of the need for fewer special education
placements. Lazar's second point is that closer contact
between home and school and greater involvement of parents
in the education of their children are probably more
important than generally realized by administrators.

Researchers Royce, Darlington, and Murray (1983) found
five characteristics important for successful intervention
programs:

1. Begin intervention as early as possible.

2. Provide services to parents as well as to the children.

3. Provide frequent home visits.

4. Involve parents in the instruction of the children.

5. Have as few children per teacher as possible.

The importance of parent involvement in a child's education is substantiated by the research of the noted social scientist Bronfenbrenner who examined two types of early intervention programs: the center-based program, and home-visitation programs where para-professionals or professionals worked with the parents and children as either a complement to a center or as a separate program. Bronfenbrenner (1974) determined that the active involvement of the family reinforces and helps sustain the effects of school programs. The experimental group in the home-based programs studied by Bronfenbrenner not only improved on their initial assessment, but gains held up well three to four years after intervention had been discontinued. Citing from these studies, Bronfenbrenner made the following generalizations: 1) the effects of intervention are cumulative, i.e. the younger the child at entrance the greater the gains, and 2) the intervention helps not only the child registered in the program but also younger siblings.

Research on parent involvement in early intervention programs has shown that families have a great impact on children's achievement in school. When parents are actively involved with helping their children learn, the effects of the program are sustained over time and these effects carry forward to younger siblings in the family.

Effective-Schools Research

The effective-schools research identified school practices and characteristics associated with measurable improvements in student achievement and excellence in student behavior. In this research, the whole school was studied as a system to identify practices that help students learn. In a review of research literature, Hawley and Rosenberg (1983) identified parent involvement as one of the four factors that determine effectiveness of schools. The other factors identified were teaching, curriculum, and environment. In similar reviews, Purkey and Smith (1983) and Fullman (1985) include parent involvement in their list of critical organizational variables for effective schools.

Some researchers have approached the question of school effectiveness and parent involvement by looking at whether schools with high achievement have more community involvement and support than similar schools with low achievement. In a nation-wide study, McDill and Rigsby (1969) concluded that the degree of parent and community

(1969) concluded that the degree of parent and community interest in quality education is the critical factor explaining how the high school environment impacts the achievement and educational aspiration of students.

Wagenaar (1977) studied 135 schools in a large mid-western city to determine levels of community involvement and support and the average reading and math scores for each school. Controlling for socio-economic status (SES), analysis indicated a positive relationship between school achievement level and community involvement and support. Most significant to achievement were the measures of community group support and fund raising, attendance at school meetings, and the number of school functions held. Therefore, school factors, as measured by the level of community support, do make a significant difference in achievement rates of students.

In the 1980s, research on the relationship between school effectiveness and parent involvement ranged from studying effects of parent involvement with infant learning to studying how parent involvement affects learning in high schools. For example, *The New Parents and Teachers Project,* developed in Missouri, worked with parents beginning in the third trimester of pregnancy and continues through the child's third birthday. Involvement strategies include home visits, parent education classes, and disseminating literature about normal child development and ideas for home

learning activities. Research results show improved intellectual and language scores for children participating in the program (White, 1985).

A study of 250 California Elementary Schools also found that parent involvement was positively correlated to student achievement. Parents were given suggestions for creating a "curriculum in the home" that included discussing everyday happenings, monitoring and viewing television together, encouraging reading, and showing interest in the child's world. In the 29 controlled studies, 91% of children in the program benefited when the learning environment in the home improved through increased use of suggested activities (Herman and Yeh, 1983).

While studying school-based programs where low-income parents had been trained to work with their children, Becher (1984) found that as a result of this training, there was significant improvement in children's language skills, performance on tests, and behavior in school. In addition, parents who were involved in the schools developed more positive attitudes about school and school staff, helped gather support in the community, became more active in community affairs, and found ways of obtaining more education for themselves.

Further indication of the importance of parent involvement to school effectiveness is found in a study of 22 school districts in the metropolitan Milwaukee area.

Phillips (1985) and her colleagues studied the association between parent involvement and increased school performance. Research was conducted by interviewing administrators and surveying 1594 parents by telephone. The findings suggested that it is not simply the amount of time parents spend interacting in schools or even the effectiveness of that interaction that makes the difference in student achievement, but it is parent actions in the home and positive expectations for the child's achievement that affect school performance.

According to Phillips, schools that do well are likely to have active parent organizations, numerous volunteers, and a high frequency of positive interactions between parents and teachers, but those actions will be backed up by early education and positive educational expectations for the child. Poor or undereducated parents may be less able to afford, or perhaps understand the importance of, either school or home involvement. Thus without fundamental changes, the cycle of under-education will continue (Phillips, S., Smith, M., & Witte, J., 1985).

Summary

Findings from studies on parent involvement and school effectiveness show that the family provides the primary educational environment for the child. However, when families are involved in the schools, an important link is

formed. Information and support can flow from home to school and from school to home, strengthening both environments for the child. Therefore, involving parents in their children's formal education improves students' achievement.

The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously throughout high school. The communities and the schools also benefit when parents become actively involved in the schools. Children from low income and minority families have much to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well-educated to help, but these parents may not feel competent to deal with schools and may not understand how they can contribute to the learning environment.

Parent Involvement Research

Traditionally, parent involvement has been defined through activities such as voting for the school budget, supporting the school as an institution, and volunteering efforts in support of the school's activities. Today, research indicates that the home is a vital educational institution: every school depends on the input from home. Children's motivation to learn and keep on learning depends on the attitudes they bring from the home to the classroom (Walberg, 1984). Therefore, parent involvement must be seen

in a broader perspective which includes not only attending school functions but also extending school learning activities into the home. The parent involvement literature includes the effect parents can have on their children's learning, roles parents play in schools, the attitudes of parents and teachers towards these roles, and the barriers parents and schools face in trying to fulfill these roles.

Parent's Effect on Children's School Learning

The family's endorsement of schools affects children's self-esteem, self discipline, mental health, and long term aspirations (Lightfoot, 1978). The parent's positive participation in school sends a signal to the child that the parent approves of what goes on in school. This signal of approval is necessary because school life is often strikingly different from life at home and in the neighborhoods of low income or minority children. This endorsement of the school helps the child integrate the two environments.

Examining how parent involvement affects the child, Becher (1984) found several key family variables, or ways of behaving, that are clearly related to student achievement. Children with higher achievement scores have parents with high expectations for them, parents who respond and interact with them frequently, and who see themselves as "teachers" of their children. Parents of high scoring children also

use more complex language, provide problem-solving strategies, act as models of learning and achievement, and reinforce what children are learning in school.

Roles Parents Play in Involvement

Many studies have looked at the roles parents play in schools and the effectiveness of those roles regarding children's education. Becker and Epstein (1982) surveyed 3700 public school elementary teachers and administrators in 600 schools in the Maryland and Washington D.C. area. In addition, they surveyed parents of 1,269 students in 82 third and fifth grade classrooms. The purpose of this research was to identify levels of home/school involvement. They identified the following five levels:

Level 1. Basic obligation of parents, for example:

* Provide for children's health and safety.

* Prepare children for school.

* Teach family life skills through the school years.

* Build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior.

Level 2. Basic obligations of schools, for example:

* Communicate with parents about school programs and children's progress.

* Vary the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices and report cards, and

conferences to improve all parents' understanding
of school programs and children's progress.

Level 3. Parent involvement at schools, for example:

* Volunteers assist teacher, administrators, and
children in classroom or in other areas of
the school.

* Parents attend student's performance, sports or
other events, or attend workshops or other
programs for their own education and training.

Level 4. Parent involvement in learning activities in
the home, for example:

* Parents initiate activities, or children
initiate requests for help.

* Teachers share ideas and instructions with
parents for monitoring or assisting their
children at home in learning activities
coordinated with children's class work.

Level 5. Parent involvement in governance and
advocacy, for example:

* Parents have decision making roles in PTA/PTO,
advisory councils, or other committees or
groups at school district or state level.

* Activists in independent advocacy groups
monitor the schools and work for school
improvement (Becker and Epstein, 1982).

Becker and Epstein classified level one and level two involvement as passive forms, noting that these activities require only one-way communication, from home to school or from school to home. Types three, four, and five were classified as active forms of involvement because they require interaction between home and school. Findings showed that passive involvement techniques were most frequently used by both parents and teachers, even though both parents and teachers reported that more active forms would do more to help children learn. For example, only 75 of the teachers initiated requests for active participation such as monitoring homework or volunteering in the classroom.

Becker and Epstein explain this by saying that most teachers understand parent involvement as a complex process and make only tentative requests instead of requirements for involvement from parents. For example, 60% of the teachers said that they could provide parents with ideas for learning activities to use in the home but could not influence the parents to use them. However, the parents reported they routinely spent fifteen minutes a night helping their children with school work and would be glad to spend more time if they were asked by the teachers.

One implication of this research is that there are misconceptions about role expectations between parents and teachers. On one hand, teachers are hesitant or do not know

how to involve parents in active strategies, and because
parents are not involved in active ways, teachers think they
are not interested. On the other hand, parents may not know
how or when to initiate more active involvement strategies.

The teachers in this study reflected three perspectives
on parent-school relations: (1) parents care but cannot do
much to help the school or the children in actual learning;
(2) parents care but should not help with school learning;
(3) parents care and can be a great deal of help if they are
shown how to help. Furthermore, many of the teachers'
comments stressed the parents' and the students' needs for
time at home that was free of academic demands. But many
parents reported a willingness to spend up to an hour a
night monitoring children's school work if they were asked
and told what to do.

A similar study by Chavkin and Williams (1987) surveyed
administrators, teachers and parents in six southeastern
states. Parent involvement roles were defined as paid
school staff, co-learner, advocate, decision maker,
audience, home tutor, and school program supporter. Data
from the study show misunderstandings between groups similar
to those found in the Becker-Epstein study. For example,
although all three groups (administrators, teachers, and
parents) agreed that there was value in parent involvement
in the schools, administrators and teachers favored the more
passive roles of audience, school program supporter, and

home tutor for parents. While many parents expressed interest in these roles, 75% of the parents also expressed considerable interest in sharing decision-making roles.

The overall level of parents' responses indicates substantial disparity between their level of interest and their actual level of participation. For example, parents reported that they rarely participated in either curriculum or instructional decisions at the school, but they would like to do so. A majority of administrators reported that parents lack the skills and training necessary for such participation.

Two supplemental sections on the parents' survey added additional information about their involvement in education. More than 90% of the parents said that giving parents more information about their children's success in school, and helping parents better understand the subjects taught would improve parent involvement in schools. These survey results indicate that parents have interests and may be more sophisticated than educators perceive them to be. As a result of this study, Chavkin and Williams suggest that administrators and teachers ask parents how they want to be involved in their children's education.

The Effectiveness of Different Roles

In 1978, Gordon reviewed research concerning the effects of parent involvement on schooling. He divided parent involvement into three models:

1) The Parent Impact Model (the influence of the parents and the home on a child's learning patterns)

2) The School Impact Model (direct parent involvement in the schools, from volunteering to serving on governance councils)

3) The Community Impact Model (parent involvement in all possible roles from teacher at home to active member of the local community).

After assessing the effects of each model, Gordon concluded that children, whose parents are actively involved in several different roles over a long period of years, score higher on achievement tests than other children. Furthermore, the effects seem to be greater on the second child than the first. Therefore, the more comprehensive and long lasting the parent involvement, the more effective it is likely to be.

In the Community Impact Model, parents play six crucial roles: volunteers, paid employee, teacher at home, audience, decision maker, and adult learner. When parents are engaged in any one of the roles, the role not only influences the parent's own behavior and the behavior of the child, but involvement in these roles also increases the school's

effectiveness. When there are parents within a school playing all roles, the school will be most effective. Therefore, the better planned, more comprehensive, and longer lasting the parent involvement, the more effective the schools become as institutions in serving the community.

Another reason to advocate multiple roles in parent involvement is that they offer the greatest opportunities for widespread and sustained involvement (Epstein, 1986). Parent-involvement programs that center only on attendance at meetings or involvement in school activities during the day will have limited participation due to the increased number of working parents. Involvement programs need to reach out to single parents and to families in which both parents work. Furthermore, a multiple role approach will offer all parents opportunities to utilize their own strengths and interests in the effort to help their children do better at school.

Barriers to Participation

There is considerable evidence that a major impediment to home/school collaboration results from misconceptions teachers and parents have about each other (Becker and Epstein, 1982, Chavkin and Williams, 1987).

In a study involving the parents and teachers of students enrolled in two junior high schools, findings showed that when teachers were asked about barriers to

improving home/school relationships, nearly 50% of the teachers attributed the barriers to parents (Leitch and Tangrini, 1988). Teachers cited the following barriers most frequently:

* parents' unrealistic expectations of the school's role,

* large families,

* parents' attitude that the school isn't important enough to take time off from work,

* parents' inability to help with school work,

* parental jealousy of teachers' upward mobility,

* apathy of long-lasting teachers and their lack of responsiveness to parents,

* absence of activities to draw parents in, and

* teachers' resentment or suspicion of parents who are involved.

In the same study, when parents were asked about the barriers to involvement, they, like the teachers, centered barriers in themselves. The most often cited barriers were:

* health problems,

* economic differences between themselves and teachers, and

* work responsibilities.

Parents often said they felt teachers looked down upon them for not being as successful as the teachers. Many parents felt a need for communication from school about

their children's attendance, their children's strong points and accomplishments, and what their children were learning in school.

When teachers' opinions were compared to parents' opinions, several misconceptions were revealed. First of all, teachers felt that parents with large families would be less involved in school. However, according to the involvement scale constructed for each family participating in the survey, families that are highly involved are likely to have six or more members.

Teachers also believed that families with two working parents would be less involved. Actually, families with two working parents were more involved than families with one parent home during the day.

A third misconception involved the amount of time parents were willing to spend helping their children with school work. Contrary to teacher's beliefs, parents were willing to spend time with the child doing homework and would spend more time if asked or told how to do so. This substantiates the findings of both Becker and Epstein (1982) and Chavkin and Williams (1987). In other words, parents are generally interested in and willing to take time to work with their children on school related activities.

Leitch and Tangrini (1988) found that the educational attainment of parents did not appear to be related to the children's academic or behavioral performance. Some parents

who had left school before high school graduation or before
completing college said they left because they had to work,
not because they lacked interest in school. Furthermore,
parents who had completed college seemed just as likely to
run into school problems with their children as parents with
less education.

Although misconceptions are a factor in home/school
involvement practices, it is lack of information that is the
major barrier to school involvement. Parents lack
information about what schools need from them, and schools
lack information about what parents need in order to become
full partners in the education of the child.

Summary

It is known that the home environment, particularly
parent involvement, has tremendous impact on the child's
ability to learn and achieve in school. It is also known,
from early intervention studies, that parents can be taught
to work more effectively with their children. What is now
needed is to know what information parents want in order to
increase their involvement as partners with the schools.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The study outlined in this paper represents the causal-comparative method of research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, recorded, coded, and analyzed. The aim of the study was to explore and describe the attitudes and preferences regarding home/school involvement strategies of mothers of kindergarten students who have been identified as at-risk for failure in school and mothers of kindergarten students who have been designated as peer-models and enrolled in a full-day kindergarten. This chapter includes a description of the sample, a discussion of the formation and content of the interview guide, and a description of the procedures used to collect and analyze the data.

Sample Population

The sample for this study were mothers of children enrolled in the *Kindergarten Extended Education Program* (K.E.E.P.) operated by the Corvallis [OR] School District. This is a full-day kindergarten program which began in the fall of 1989. The philosophical approach of the program as described by the planning committee is:

> Understanding that children's earliest years
> in school are most crucial, we recognize the
> importance of providing successful and
> motivating early learning experiences for
> each student. We believe that full-day
> kindergarten is one method of providing a
> positive educational experience for students
> who are at-risk of not succeeding in school
> because of maturational, emotional, social
> and/or experiential deficits (Corvallis
> School District, 1989b, p.1).

Thus, the purpose of the K.E.E.P. program is to provide a successful early-schooling experience for students who are designated as being at-risk for failure in school.

In 1989, the Corvallis [OR] School District's At-Risk Study Committee identified characteristics of children who may be at-risk for failure in school. These characteristics became part of the criteria for selecting students for at-risk intervention programs. These characteristics included low self-esteem, high absentee rate, passive behavior, fragile home situation, and poor coping skills.

The K.E.E.P. program serves a heterogeneous group of forty-six children and is located in two classrooms in two different buildings in the school district. In June of 1989, the district announced the formation of the full-day kindergarten program and asked parents to apply if interested. A committee of teachers and administrators screened the applications, interviewed parents, tested children who showed potential for being at-risk for failure in school, and selected twenty-eight children to be

designated at-risk and served during the first year of the program.

The criteria for selection of at-risk students for the K.E.E.P. Program were outlined in the <u>Report on Full-day Kindergarten Pilot</u> (1989b). These criteria included:

1) No prior kindergarten experience

2) Residence within the attendance area of one of the designated feeder schools

3) Family income level -- preference being given to students from low income families. Income guidelines used are from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which are used for free and reduced lunch as well as for admittance to Head Start.

4) Student's preschool experience, including preschool and home experiences. Preference will be given to those with no preschool experience.

5) Staff recommendations based on parent/child interview, district criteria identifying characteristics of youth who are appropriate for an at-risk intervention programs, information from preschool attended, and parent questionnaire. (Corvallis School District, 1989b p.3).

The same committee selected eighteen students with no known academic or social problems from the remaining pool of applications. These students were designated peer-models. Adjustments were made during the selection of the peer-model group in order to create balanced classrooms regarding gender and age of students. The staff, which consists of a teacher and a full time teaching assistant for each classroom, has made every effort not to formally identify

the at-risk students to their parents or to separate the services offered to parents in any way.

Sample Size

All mothers of children enrolled in the K.E.E.P. program were included in the initial sample for this study. However, during the time in which the interviews were conducted, five mothers of children designated at-risk were eliminated from the sample. In these situations, the mothers and their families were considered, by their child's teacher and the school's principal, to be in crisis or extreme stress and therefore unable to effectively deal with the interview situation.

The stress-causing situation was different in each case. One of the mothers had just accepted counseling. One mother had just been diagnosed schizophrenic and had been put on medication. Another mother displayed anxiety concerning meeting and talking with the interviewer. No explanation was asked for nor given to explain this anxiety, but it was thought, by the teacher, that this mother had previous problems with case workers or other social agency individuals. The fourth mother had just had her children removed from her home, and the fifth mother was out of town during the entire time the interviews were being conducted. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 41: 23 mothers

of kindergartners considered at-risk for school failure and 18 mothers of students designated as peer models.

Profiles of Households Studied

Table 1 compares the make up of the families of the at-risk students with the families of the peer models with regard to number and role of adults living in the households.

Table 1
Percentages of Adults in Household Roles
(actual count)

Category	At-Risk Population (23)		Peer-Model Population (18)	
Single Parent	35	(8)	17	(3)
Two Parent	26	(6)	78	(14)
Step Family	26	(6)	5	(1)
Foster Family	13	(3)	0	(0)

Thirty-nine percent of the students designated at-risk for future school failure lived in step-families or in foster families. Two of the three foster families had been established within the current school year. The other foster family had been established 18 months prior to the beginning of the child's kindergarten year.

Two of the six step-families represented in the at-risk population were families established by marriages which occurred at least six months prior to the beginning of the child's kindergarten year. The remaining four step-families were formed when the single mother established residency

with a male adult. All four of these families were established at least three months prior to the child beginning kindergarten. The one step-family represented in the peer model population was established by a marriage taking place two years prior to the beginning of the child's year in kindergarten.

Of the eight single-parent households in the at-risk population, five mothers had never been married, while the other three had all been divorced for more than eighteen months before their child's entrance in kindergarten. In the peer-model population, all three single mothers had been divorced for at least two years prior to the kindergarten year.

Table 2 displays the placement of the child among the other children in the family.

Table 2
Placement in Percent of the Kindergarten Child in Family
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk Kindergartner (23)		Peer Kindergartner (18)	
Youngest Child	30.5	(7)	75	(12)
Oldest Child	30.5	(7)	11	(3)
Middle Child	22	(5)	9	(4)
Only Child	17	(4)	5	(1)

In 47.5% of the families of at-risk students, the kindergarten child is either the oldest or the only child in the family. This is the case in only 16% of the families of peer-model students.

Employment of Adults in Family

The distribution of employment of the adults in two parent families, is described in Table 3.

Table 3
Distribution in Percent of Employment In Two-Parent Families
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk (15)		Peer-Model (15)	
Father Full-time Mother not Employed	13	(2)	47	(7)
Father Part-time Mother not Employed	13	(2)	0	
Father Full-time Mother Part-time	13	(2)	7	(1)
Father Not Employed Mother Full-time	7	(1)	7	(1)
Father Not Employed Mother Part-Time	20	(3)	0	
Both Part-time	7	(1)	7	(1)
Both Full-time	7	(1)	32	(5)
No one in Family Employed	20	(3)	0	

In the single parent households, all three single mothers of peer-model students worked full time. Two of these mothers owned businesses and described their work schedule as being flexible. Of the eight single-mother families of at-risk students, two mothers were working full time; one was working part time; two were not working at all outside the home; one was a home child care provider, which

she described as full-time work with part-time pay; and two mothers were full time students who worked occasionally on holidays and weekends.

Income

The annual income for these two groups are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
Annual Income in Percent for Families of At-Risk
And Families of Peer-Model Students
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk (23)	Peer Model (18)
- 10,000	35 (8)	0
10-20,000	39 (9)	17 (3)
20-35,000	22 (5)	33 (6)
35-50,000	4 (1)	22 (4)
50,000 +	0	28 (5)

Seventy-four percent of the families of at-risk students are living on $20,000 a year or less. For the families with more than four members, this represents a very low income level. This, however, was one of the criteria for the selection of at-risk students for the K.E.E.P. Program.

Instrumentation

The results of this study depended upon obtaining attitudes and opinions concerning sensitive matters. Such information might be difficult to obtain from a questionnaire because it may be concerned with negative aspects of the self or negative feelings toward others. Respondents are not likely to reveal this kind of information about themselves on a questionnaire and will only reveal it in an interview setting if they have been made to feel comfortable. Therefore, the researcher chose the semi-structured interview format and created an interview guide.

The Interview Guide

The measurement instrument used in this study was the interview guide (see Appendix A). This guide lists, in the desired sequence, the questions asked during the interview and it also provided the interviewer with guidelines as to what to say at the opening and closing of the interview.

Content Validity

The researcher developed the interview guide by first outlining the objectives of the study and then generating from the literature as many potential items as possible. Content validity for the instrument was established by utilizing the Delphi Technique. Selected experts in the

field of early childhood education and at-risk intervention programs served on the Delphi Panel (See Appendix B). These individuals were polled through a sequence of two questionnaires until they reached 80% consensus on each item to be included.

The initial round of the Delphi process asked panel members to react to items constructed from literature review to determine the appropriateness of wording and whether there was ambiguity or redundancy within the listing of potential items for the instrument. The response categories for this phase asked each panel member to react to each item according to the following scale:

Retain _____

Reject _____

Retain with the following modification(s) _____

_____

Members of the Delphi panel were encouraged to contribute new items for the questionnaire if they felt there were gaps. Appendix C presents a sample of the initial letter sent to each member of the Delphi panel.

The second and final round utilized a five point scale to ascertain the level of importance for each of the items which were retained, or retained through modification, in the initial phase. The Likert-type scale carried the following categories:

Very Unimportant		Moderately Important		Very Important
1	2	3	4	5

The researcher included in the guide all items whose mean ratings were 3.5 or above. Consensus among members of the Delphi panel was met at the end of the second round.

Field-Testing

With the completion of the Delphi Process and prior to the data collection phase of the study, the researcher field-tested the interview guide. Subjects for the field-test were 12 mothers of students enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs within the Corvallis district. The mothers were selected because their children had met the original criteria for at-risk students but had not been enrolled in the K.E.E.P. program due to lack of space. The classroom teachers scheduled the interviews which the researcher conducted and recorded in the school building.

Based on the results of the field-tests, the researcher made the following revisions:
1) Open-ended questions were grouped together in categories and organized in such a way as to provide an easy flow of information during the interview.

2) The format was shortened because there seemed to be some redundancy in questions and because many mothers could not sustain their attention through more than fifteen questions at a time.

3) The wording on several items was changed to make them more understandable, and probes were added to the guide to help the interviewer clarify questions.

4) An introductory question concerning the child and how that child was doing in school was added in order to build some rapport between the mother and the interviewer.

Reliability

A coefficient of stability was established for sections IV and V of the final form of the interview guide by using the test-retest method. The researcher conducted ten interviews with mothers of students enrolled in kindergartens in the Albany School District. Two weeks later, the two sections of the interview guide were readministered. The two sets of scores were correlated using the Pearson r method. For section IV $r = +.67$ and for section V $r = + .72$.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted all interviews during a three week period. Each interview took from thirty to forty-five minutes. In one school, the teacher scheduled the interviews to coincide with the time of the parent-teacher conferences; the interviews were held in the school building but not in the classroom. Even with this amount of co-ordination with the teacher, five of the interviews (two of the at-risk and three of the peer-model) had to be rescheduled.

In the other school, the researcher called each mother to explain the purpose of the interview. All mothers agreed to schedule an interview at the school. Of these twenty interviews, nine had to be rescheduled. Six of these nine were mothers of at-risk students.

The researcher took notes during the interview and each interview was recorded on audio tape. Tape recordings were reviewed to check data before it was coded or analyzed.

Method of Analysis

The Interview Guide used in this study had six sections; each was designed to gather specific data needed to answer the study's objectives. The purpose of the first section was to determine, through a series of open-ended questions, common attitudes of respondents toward involvement in their children's education. There were five

clusters of questions. The first cluster dealt with the comfort level and frequency of the mother's visits to the child's school. The second cluster asked for opinions and attitudes concerning teacher-parent interaction. The third cluster asked the mother to remember her own experiences in school and to state her expectations and fears for her child's education. The fourth cluster asked the mother to talk about the activities she did with her child at home and determine how she felt she was contributing to her child's education. The last cluster of questions asked the mother to talk about the barriers that interfered with participating directly or indirectly in school. Responses to these clusters were coded, counted, and analyzed to determine the frequency (percent of occurrence) of response to each item.

Part II of the questionnaire asked the mother to select programs and resources she felt schools should offer in order to be supportive of families. Each mother was also asked if she would use these programs or resources if given the opportunity. A chi square test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups of mothers.

The purpose of Part III of the interview guide was to determine how mothers viewed the importance of different home/school involvement strategies as contributing to their child's school success. They were also asked to rate how

comfortable they felt using each strategy. They were given
a list of home-involvement strategies or activities and
asked to rank how important they felt this strategy was in
relationship to helping their child succeed in school (Not
Important, Important, Very Important). Each mother was then
asked to rate how comfortable she felt when engaged in this
activity (Not Comfortable, Comfortable, Very Comfortable).
If she reported average or less than average comfort level,
she was asked to explain why or what she would need in
order to be more comfortable with the strategy. Chi square
tests were used to determine if there was a significant
difference between the two groups of mothers.

The purpose of Part IV was to determine what topics
each mother felt she needed to know more about in order to
more effectively help her child succeed in school. The
mother was given a list of twenty items representing common
themes for parent education classes or workshops and asked
to rate each on a continuum from 1 to 5, one being of lowest
priority or interest, five being of highest priority or
interest. Scores for each topic were averaged for each
group, and topics were ranked in order of preference by mean
score for each group.

Additional analyses were done by grouping the topics
into the following five categories:

1) How children learn in school,

2) How mothers can deal with their own issues,

3) Discipline,

4) General development issues, and

5) Care for the family.

The mean score for each responding group was determined for each category of topics. A two-tailed t test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups of mothers.

Part V asked each mother to rate different methods she might use to gain information about helping her child in school. The mother was given a list of fifteen commonly used techniques and asked to rate each on a scale of one to five, one being the least effective for her and five being the most effective in helping her learn about helping her child. Mean scores were determined from each of the two responding groups on each learning strategy. These mean scores were contrasted using a t-test.

Significance Level

In exploratory research, particularly with a small sample size, it is important to guard against Type II errors. A major purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between many variables and the preexisting condition of having a student designated as being at-risk for failure in school. This exploration can lead to the discovery of relationships which are worthy of further experimental investigation. Therefore, the .05 level of

significance was used to determine if there was statistical significance between responses of the mothers.

Summary

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the attitudes and preferences regarding home/school involvement strategies of 23 mothers of kindergarten students who had been identified as at-risk for failure in school and 18 mothers of kindergarten students who had been identified as peer-models. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using frequency counts, t-tests, and chi square tests. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the responses of the two groups.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis relative to the investigation. It is organized into sections corresponding to one or more of the research variables.

Age of Mother at Birth of First Child

Respondents were asked their age at the birth of their first child. A mean score and standard deviation was computed for each group, and a t-value was computed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups of mothers. Results of this analysis are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5
Age in Years of Mother at Birth of First Child

	At-Risk Mothers	Peer-Model Mothers
Mean	19.4	24.3
Standard Deviation	1.44	2.78
t-Value	-7.2869 Significant at .05	

There was a significant difference between the two groups of mothers regarding the age of the mother at the birth of her first child. Mothers of at-risk students had their first child at an earlier age than mothers of peer-model students.

Education of Mothers

Table 6 compares the level of educational attainment of the of the mothers studied.

Table 6
Highest Educational Attainment in Percent of
Mothers of At-Risk and Mothers of Peer-Models
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk Population (23)		Peer-Model Population (18)	
Some High School	26	(6)	0	
High School Diploma	21	(5)	22	(4)
GED	13	(3)	0	
Some College	13	(3)	34	(6)
Currently in College	26	(6)	0	
Bachelor Degree	0		28	(5)
Graduate School or Degree	0		17	(3)

Six of the 23 mothers of at-risk students are currently attending college or community college on a full or three-quarter time basis. Of these six mothers, two are single and four are living with males who are also in school on a full- or part-time basis.

There is a notable difference in the educational attainment level for the two populations. None of the mothers of at-risk students had completed college, but 39%

had attended college or were currently attending college. Seventy-nine percent of mothers of peer-model students had some college or had completed college or graduate school.

Attitudes Toward Schools and Involvement

Each respondent was asked a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit attitudinal responses in several areas. These areas included frequency and reasons for visiting the classroom, ideas about what makes a good teacher for her child, the strongest memory of her own school experience, her fears for her child's educational experience, and her expectation of how her child will do in school. Results are reported here in both narrative and tabular form.

Frequency and Reasons for Visiting Schools

Table 7 displays the frequency of visits reported by each group of mothers.

Table 7
Frequency in Percent of Visits Since September Reported by
Mothers of At-Risk and Mothers of Peer-Model Students
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk Mothers (23)	Peer-Model Mothers (18)	
Less than 3 times	34 (8)	33	(6)
3 to 8 times	57 (13)	22	(4)
Working Weekly in the classroom	9 (2)	44	(8)

Twenty-two weeks of school had elapsed at the time the interviews were conducted. Every mother stated that she would like to visit the classroom more often than she did. The major reason reported by both groups for not visiting the classroom more was the mother's own work or school schedule.

Three mothers of at-risk students mentioned transportation as a barrier to visiting. Three mothers of at-risk students and two mothers of peer-model students mentioned having younger children as the reason they did not visit the classroom more often. Three mothers of peer-model students reported that they would like to visit the class more often but thought that it might interfere with their children's adjustment or privacy.

None of the responding mothers indicated that she was reluctant to visit the kindergarten classroom. However, five of the mothers of peer model students and four of the

mothers of at-risk students reported that they had been
reluctant to visit the classrooms of some of their other
children. The four mothers of at-risk students stated that
this reluctance came from the fact that they had not been
invited by the school or teacher. Three of the five mothers
of peer-model students stated that their reluctance came
from a feeling of discomfort displayed by the teachers. The
other two mothers of peer-model students stated that they
felt discomfort on the part of the teacher, but they visited
anyway because they felt it was in the child's best
interest.

When asked about the frequency of other kinds of direct
contact with the classroom teacher, all mothers reported
that they were satisfied with the amount of contact they
had. Five mothers of peer-models and three mothers of at-
risk students stated that they were often able to visit the
teacher when they brought or picked up their children from
school.

Respondents were asked why they visited or worked in
the classroom at all. Fifteen of the 23 mothers of at-risk
students responded to this question. Eight, or 53% of these
mothers stated that they visited the classroom because the
teacher asked them to. Four mothers, or 27% responded that
it was fun, and three mothers, or 20% responded that they
wanted to know what was going on in the classroom in order
to help their children at home.

Sixteen of the 18 mothers of peer-model students responded to this question. Six of these mothers, or 38%, reported that they wanted to know what was going on so they could help their children at home. Four mothers, or 26%, reported they wanted to know their children's friends or wanted to see their children interact with other children. Six mothers, or 38%, reported they felt that the mother's presence in school let her child know that the mother felt what happened in school was important. One mother of a peer model child commented,

> "If he sees me spend time at school, then he will
> know that I care about what goes on in school and
> how he does in school."

Respondents were also asked to describe the most pleasant contact they had had with any teacher or any school. All mothers interviewed responded to this question. The responses of both groups of mothers were similar in that they involved being told by teachers that their children were doing well in school or being told about the positive attributes of their children. Three mothers of peer-model students and five mothers of at-risk students indicated that the teacher had linked the fact that the child was doing well or had positive attributes with some action on the part of the mother or family.

None of the responding mothers could describe an unpleasant experience with the kindergarten her child was attending. However, six of the mothers of peer-model

students and three of the mothers of at-risk students did describe an unpleasant experience involving one of their other children. Again, the experiences of the two groups of mothers were similar in that they involved a misunderstanding concerning the action of a teacher towards a child.

In a question related to visiting school, mothers in two-parent families were asked which parent takes the major responsibility for communicating with the schools. In the at-risk population, 70% of the mothers reported they took this responsibility. The remaining 30% of the at-risk mothers reported they shared this responsibility equally with the father. In the peer-model population, 89% of the mothers reported they took the major responsibility, while the remaining 11% reported the responsibility was shared equally with the father.

Respondents were asked how important they felt it was to have both parents involved in the child's education. Five of the eight single-mothers of at-risk students responded that the involvement of both parents is important, but it is not always possible. Two of the three single-mothers of peer-model students also reported that involvement of both parents is important but not always possible.

The mothers in two-parent households, both in the

at-risk population and in the peer-model population, had

similar views regarding this question. One mother of an

at-risk student commented,

> "There are different ways to be involved. It
> might look like (father's name) isn't involved
> because he never gets to school, but I always
> share the information and he finds other ways to
> help (child's name)."

One mother of a peer-model student commented,

> "It is nice when both parents can come to
> conferences together or come to visit and help in
> the schools, but it just isn't realistic. What is
> important is that children know that what goes on
> at school is seen as important by both parents."

Attitudes Towards the Qualities of Teachers

Each respondents was asked to describe the qualities of

a good teacher for her child. The first three responses

from each mother were recorded and categorized. Responses

fell into six categories. Results are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8
Top Three Reported Qualities of Good Teachers
In Percent

Category	At-Risk Mothers (23)	Peer-Model Mothers (18)
Enthusiasm	65	60
Patience	40	56
Loving	28	35
Able to Meet Individual Differences	78	69
Able to Maintain Classroom Discipline	76	68
Other	13	12

The top three priorities for both groups of mothers were the same; meeting individual differences, maintaining classroom discipline, and having patience. Other qualities reported to be important to both groups were having a sense of humor, enjoying the work they do, and having a genuine liking for children.

Memories of School Experience

Respondents were asked to describe their strongest memory of their school experience. All mothers in both groups reported memories. Responses were analyzed and separated into five categories and frequencies were computed

for each category for each responding group. Results of

this analysis are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9
Mother's Strongest Memories of School
Categorized and Reported in Percent
(Actual Count)

Category	At-Risk Mothers (23)		Peer-Model Mothers (18)	
Positive Memory of Specific Adult	9	(2)	44	(8)
Negative Memory of Specific Adult	22	(5)	0	
Positive Memory of Specific Child or Children	13	(3)	22	(4)
Negative Memory of Specific Child or Children	22	(5)	0	
Positive Memory of Specific Event	17	(4)	28	(5)
Negative Memory of Specific Event	17	(4)	6	(1)

Mothers of peer-model students had more positive

memories of school than mothers of at-risk students and

these memories were divided between memories of specific

people and events. Many of the memories of peer-model

mothers centered on social activities. For example, one

mother of a peer-model student described a field trip to the

beach and a picnic as being most memorable. Another mother

of a peer-model student described her own school-celebrated

birthday party as being the most memorable. A third mother

of a peer-model described winning an award for a painting as being the most memorable event. In all three of these cases, the mothers reported that their own mothers were present at school during the time the event took place.

Mothers of at-risk students reported more negative memories involving teachers or involving specific discipline actions. For example, one mother of an at-risk student described an incident in which she had been subvocalizing while she was reading and the teacher had walked by and said loudly to the class, " We read with our eyes not with our mouths." Another mother of an at-risk student described an event centered around taking a test. The teacher had been walking among the students, reading over their shoulders. When the teacher came to this student, she stopped, read the answers, and said loudly to the class, "Didn't you study the material?"

It is interesting to note that both groups of mothers could quote teachers or give specific and vivid details about negative events or people. Positive experiences were portrayed by both groups in more general terms. It is also interesting to note that 35 of 41 memories described, or 85%, occurred in kindergarten, first, or second grade.

Expression of Fears for Child's Schooling

Each mother was asked to state her strongest fears for her child regarding the child's schooling. Again, responses were analyzed and categorized; frequencies of responses are reported in Table 10.

Table 10
Frequency in Percent of Expression of
Particular Fears Regarding Child's Schooling
(Actual Count)

Fear	At-Risk Mothers (23)		Peer-Model Mothers (18)	
Negative Peer Group	30	(7)	22	(4)
Disillusionment about School or Learning	39	(9)	22	(4)
Drug Abuse	9	(2)	44	(8)
Poor Self Concept	21	(5)	11	(2)

In 8 of the 23 reports from mothers of at-risk students, the fear for the child expressed by the mother is similar in some way to the negative memory this mother expressed about her own schooling. For example, one mother of an at-risk student discussed how a particular teacher had verbally expressed her doubt as to the mothers's ability to learn to read. This same mother, when asked about her greatest fear for her child's schooling commented,

> "I am afraid that some teacher will misjudge (child's name) abilities and tell her, and then she won't want to try anymore."

Six of the mothers of peer-model students expressed negative memories about events, particularly events involving other children. Four of these mothers' fears for their own children reflect the theme of becoming involved with the wrong peer groups. The two questions were separated in the interview form by only two other questions. It could be that the memories themselves evoked the fear.

Mothers of peer-model students reported the fear that their children would get involved with drugs. The school system in which all of these children attend is actively promoting a parent education class aimed at preventing drug abuse in the adolescent years. Therefore, these mothers have received much written information concerning the prevalence of drugs to young people in this area.

Expectations for School Success

The respondents were asked how they thought their children would do in elementary school and middle school. Responses were categorized in terms of the strength and type of reservation, if any, expressed by the mothers. Sixty-four percent of the mothers of peer-model students felt, without reservation, that their children would do well in elementary school. Thirty percent of these mothers felt that their children would do well if they weren't distracted by the social aspects of school. Six percent of the mothers of peer-model students felt that their children would do

well in elementary school if the schools or teachers gave them a good foundation.

Thirty-five percent of the mothers of at-risk students felt, without reservation, that their child would do well in elementary school. Forty-three percent of these mothers felt that their child would do well if the schools and teachers provided a good foundation. Thirteen percent of the mothers of at-risk students felt that their child would do well if they did not become distracted by the social aspects of school, and nine percent of the mothers had some reservations as to how well their children would do, but could not express why they had that reservation.

When asked about how their children would do in middle school, 40% of the mothers of peer models and 72% of the mothers of at-risk students had no prediction. Most of these mothers said that it was much too soon to tell how well a child will do in middle school.

Forty-four percent of the mothers of peer-model students predicted that their children would do well in middle school if the schools and teachers provided the opportunity to learn skills and study habits. Thirteen percent of the mothers of at-risk students also predicted that their children would do well in school if the school provided the opportunity to learn the necessary skills.

Sixteen percent of the mothers of peer-model students predicted that their children would do well in middle school

if they were not distracted by the social aspects of school. Fifteen percent of the mothers of at-risk students expressed a reservation about the success of their children in middle school but could not explain that reservation.

Mothers were asked what they considered to be the most important thing they could do to help their children succeed in school. A majority (78%) of both groups of mothers stated that they should stay in communication with their children's school. When asked what the school could do to strengthen communication, most mothers in both groups discussed situations in which the school would let parents know early if there were any problems, and schools would let parents know if their children seemed to be making negative changes in either behavior or academic performance.

Summary

In most cases, this study showed that attitudes and opinions of mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer-model students are similar. There are three exceptions. This difference is noted in regard to mothers' expectations of how well the child will do in elementary school, articulated reasons for visiting in the classroom, and memories of their own elementary school experience.

Preference For and Use of Programs and Services

Respondents were given a list of 15 programs or services that might be offered by a school and asked two questions: "If you were the principal, would you offer this service or program?" and "As a parent would you use this service or program if you had the opportunity?"

The interviewer defined each program or service as items were read. If further explanation was needed, examples were given. Respondents' answers were recorded on the interview guide as were any comments made about particular programs or services. Item 15, Ideas for Ways I Can Help School from Home, was dropped from the study because the item was not sufficiently explained to all respondents.

Responses for each program or service were tallied and frequency was determined for each responding group. The Chi Square Test of Independence was used to determine if there was a significant difference between responding groups. The results are displayed in the following table.

Table 11
Programs or Services Selected to be Offered
by Mothers of At-Risk Students and
Mothers of Peer-Model Students

Name of Program or Service	Percent in favor At-Risk (23)	Percent in favor Peer-Model (18)	Chi Square
Parent Teacher Conferences	100	100	0
Child Care During Conferences	91	94	0.1468
Newsletters	86	94	0.0191
After School Programs for Children Whose Parents Work	86	94	0.6431
Parent Volunteer Programs	100	100	0
Parent Advisory Committee	86	88	0.0352
Parent Resource Room	47	50	0.0191
Parent Support Groups	65	55	0.3961
Support Groups for Singles	65	72	0.2288
Home Visits	60	44	1.0955
Parent Education Workshops	69	88	2.2008
Parent-Teacher Organization	65	94	5.0346 *
Activity Guides for Holidays	78	50	2.8566
Parent Education Classes	56	83	3.3522

* Significant at the .05 level, 1 degree of freedom

A significant difference in programs selected between mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer-model students was noted regarding the strategy Parent Teacher Organizations.

Tables 12 and 13 utilize the same data but ranks the choices from high to low. A comparison of these data reveal that the top five choices for both groups are virtually the same. The major differences between the two groups show when comparing the last five priorities of each group.

Table 12
Programs and Services Favored
Highest Ranking

Mothers of At-Risk (percent)	Mothers of Peer-Models (percent)
Parent-Teacher Conferences (100)	Parent-Teacher Conferences (100)
Parent Volunteer Programs (100)	Parent Volunteer Programs (100)
Child Care During Conferences (91)	Child Care During Conferences (94)
Newsletters (86)	Newsletters (94)
After School Programs For Children Whose Parents Work ((86)	After School Programs For Children Whose Parents Work (94)

Table 13
Programs and Services Favored
Lowest Ranking

Mothers of At-Risk (percent)	Mothers of Peer-Models (percent)
Parent Resource Room (47)	Home visits (44)
Parent Education Classes (56)	Parent Resource Room (50)
Home Visits (60)	Activity Guides For Holidays and Summers (50)
Parent Support Groups (65)	Parent Support Groups (55)
Parent-Teacher Organization (65)	Support Groups For Singles (72)

In comparing the lowest priorities, both groups of mothers chose Home Visits, Parent Resource Room, and Parent Support Groups. However, mothers of at-risk students also chose Parent Education Classes and Parent-Teacher Organizations as low priorities. Comments made by mothers of at-risk students concerning Parent Education included:

> "No one can understand how you can make your kid behave but you."
> "Kids are so different. No one really knows how to make kids mind."
> "Schools are for teaching children, not parents."

The at-risk mother's typical comments concerning Parent-Teacher Organizations included:

> "That's just a group of fancy mothers that like to run everything."
> "Some parents have time to do all of those things for the school, but I work."

Mothers of peer-model students chose Activity Guides as being of low priority for school services. The following comments typified their reaction to the description on this services:

> "During vacations, children need to be let alone just to play."
> "Teachers have so many other things to do, and kids just need to play sometimes."

Use of Suggested Programs and Services

When both groups of mothers were asked if they would use these resources or programs if they had the opportunity, there was more diversity among their answers. Table 14 shows results of this question.

Table 14
Indicated Use of Programs and Services
by Mothers of At-Risk and Mothers of Peer-Model
Students

Program	Percent would use At-Risk	Percent would use Peer-Model	Chi Square
Parent Teacher Conferences	100	100	0
Child Care during Conferences	60	67	0.1463
Parent Resource Room	30	22	0.9411
Parent Volunteer Program	52	67	0.9411
Parent Support Group	39	50	0.4844
Support Groups for Singles	39	28	0.4058
Activity Guides	60	50	0.2514
After School Programs Children Whose Parents Work	69	44	2.6254
Parent Education Classes	30	70	7.0571 *
Parent Education Workshops	43	89	8.9750 *
Newsletters	69	28	3.9797 *
Parent-Teacher Organization	35	67	4.1085 *
Parent Advisory Committee	43	78	10.5658 *
Home Visits	47	17	3.4667

* significant at .05 level, 1 degree of freedom

Again, ranking the programs and services for highest-
and lowest-indicated use shows the pattern of diversity
between the two groups of mothers. Table 15 and Table 16
display the results of these rankings.

Table 15
Indication of Probable Use
of Programs and Services
Top Five

Mothers of At-Risk (percent)	Mothers of Peer-Models (percent)
Parent Teacher Conferences (100)	Parent Teacher Conferences (100)
After School Programs for Children Whose Parents Work (69)	Parent Education Workshops (84)
Newsletters (69)	Parent Advisory Committee (78)
Child Care During Conferences (60)	Parent Education Classes (70)
Activity Guides for Holidays or Summers (60)	Child Care During Conferences (67)

Both groups indicated that they would use
parent-teacher conferences and child care during
conferences. However, the mothers of at-risk students
indicated they would use activity guides and newsletters.
These activities are fairly passive and not social
strategies for getting information. The mothers of peer-
model students indicated they would use parent-education
workshops and classes and parent-advisory committees. These
strategies are active, and social ways of obtaining

information about the schools and about how children are
doing in schools.

Table 16
Indicated Use of Program or Services
Lowest Five

Mothers of At-Risk (percent)	Mothers of Peer-Models (percent)
Parent Resource Room (30)	Home Visits (17)
Parent Education Classes (30)	Parent Resource Room (22)
Parent Teacher Organization (35)	Special Support Groups For Singles ((28)
Special Support Groups for Singles (39)	Newsletters (28)
Parent to Parent Support Programs for Groups (39)	After School Programs for Children Whose Parents Work (44)

It is interesting to note that mothers of at-risk
students showed a consistency between the services they
thought should be offered by the school and services they
indicated they would use. However, the mothers of
peer-models indicated that schools should offer many
services that they themselves would not use.

There was a significant difference between the two
responding groups regarding the preference for the
home/school involvement strategies of Parent Education
Classes, Parent Education Workshops, Newsletters, Parent-
Teacher Organization, and Parent Advisory Committee.

Mothers of at-risk students indicated a preference for Activity Guides and Home Visits.

Importance and Comfort Level of Home/School Involvement Strategies

Each respondent was given a list of 16 common home/school involvement strategies and asked to rate each one according to how important (Not Important, Average Importance, Very Important) she felt this strategy was in helping her to help her child be successful in school. She was also asked to rate how comfortable (Not Comfortable, Average Comfort, Very Comfortable) she was when engaged in each strategy. When responding to the comfort portion of the task, the mother was asked to comment on what made her uncomfortable or what she needed to become more comfortable with a particular strategy.

Items 3 and 12 on the Interview Guide, Listening to Your Child Read and Teaching Your Child Specific Skills, were dropped from the study because the mothers did not feel that they were specific to kindergarten. The results for the importance portion of task are given in Table 17.

Table 17
Ratings in Percent of Highest Importance for Home-School
Involvement Strategies

Strategy	At-Risk Mothers	Peer-Model Mothers	Chi Square
Calling Teacher with Questions	44	84	7.7787 *
Asking for Meetings with Teacher	48	89	8.2161 *
Knowing What Is Taught in School	39	72	5.8715
Playing Learning Games with Child	52	56	4.9311
Attending PTA Meetings	22	22	6.9649 *
Attending School Performance (Open House)	39	100	16.6377 *
Participating in School Projects	39	45	5.7569
Participating in School Decisions	35	45	5.7569
Observing in the Classroom	34	28	7.8402 *
Volunteering in the Classroom	48	61	2.5955
Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences	82	88	1.6723
Checking Child's School Work	57	62	2.5955
Talking with Child about Day	52	72	3.1697
Reading to the Child	65	83	4.4565

* Significant at the .05 level: 2 degrees of freedom

A significant difference was found between the responses of the two groups of mothers regarding 5 of the 14 strategies. In several cases the percentage of mothers rating the strategy at the highest level of importance is the same or very close in each group of mothers, and yet a significant difference was found between the groups. Chi square takes into account all three levels of ratings when computing significance. Table 18 compares the total data for one strategy.

Table 18
Ratings in Percent of
Importance of Attending Parent-Teacher Organization Meetings

	At-Risk	Peer-Models
Not Important	30	0
Average Importance	48	78
Very Important	22	22

Sixty percent of the mothers of at-risk students rated Attending Parent-Teacher Meetings as average or very important, while 100% of mothers of peer-models rated this same strategy as average or very important. Regarding the strategy, Playing Learning Games with Child, 60% of the mothers of at-risk students rated this as average or very important while 100% of the mothers of peer models rated the same strategy as average or very important. In regard to the strategies Observing Child in the Classroom and Participating in School Projects, 74% of the mothers

of at-risk students rated these strategies as average or very important while 100% of mothers of peer-model students rated them average or very important.

Both groups rated Parent-Teacher Conferences and reading to the child as being very important to increasing their own ability to help their child in school. Mothers of at-risk students also rated Checking Child's School Work, Talking to Child About Day, and Playing Learning Games with Child as being very important. These three strategies represent a high degree of parent-child interaction.

Mothers of peer-model students rated Attending Performances, Asking for Meetings with Teacher, and Calling Teacher with Questions as being very important to their ability to help their child. These three strategies represent a high degree of adult-adult interactions that lead to obtaining information about helping child.

In both groups, the strategies Attending Parent-Teacher Organization Meetings, Observing in the Classroom, Participating in School Projects, and Participating in Group Decisions received the lowest percentage of ratings as being very important to helping their children succeed in school.

Table 19 displays the results of the comfort portion of this task.

Table 19
Ratings in Percent of Highest Comfort Level
for Home/School Involvement Strategies

Strategy	At-Risk Mothers	Peer Mothers	Chi Square
Calling Teacher with Questions	43	61	4.5725
Asking for Meetings with Teacher	61	84	3.4764
Knowing What Is Taught in School	43	61	3.7435
Playing Learning Games with Child	48	67	5.5158
Attending PTA Meetings	22	17	4.5268
Attending School Performances	17	17	2.7559
Participating in School Projects	35	67	6.2837 *
Observing in the Classroom	9	44	6.6595 *
Volunteering in the Classroom	26	61	5.1082
Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences	82	89	1.6723
Checking Child's School Work	52	62	4.5787
Talking with Child About Day	65	72	0.8795
Reading to Child	56	83	5.1091

* Significant at the .05 level, 2 degrees of freedom

There was a significant difference between responding groups regarding their comfort level with two home/school involvement strategies: Participating in School Projects, and Observing in the Classroom. In both of these strategies, the mothers of peer-model students indicated a higher level of comfort when engaged in these activities than the mothers of at-risk students.

Both groups reported a high degree of comfort with three strategies: Talking to Child About Day, Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences, and Asking for Meetings with the Teacher when Questions Arise. The last two strategies may be influenced by the particular program and teachers involved in this study. In open-ended questions, each respondent was asked if she wanted more contact with the teacher and if she felt free to contact the teacher when she had questions or concerns. Eighty-five percent of the mothers of at-risk students stated they had enough contact with their children's teachers but felt free to ask for more if they felt a need. Ninety-five percent of the mothers of peer models also responded that they had enough contact but were not hesitant to call teachers and ask questions or set up additional meetings.

It is important to look at the combined percentage of low-comfort and average-comfort levels for each strategy in

order to understand what makes people comfortable and what ideas they have to increase their own comfort level. Table 20 reports this information.

Table 20
Ratings in Percent of Average and Low Comfort
Level for Home-School Involvement Strategies

Strategy	At-Risk Mothers	Peer Mothers
Calling Teacher with Questions	57	39
Asking for Meetings with Teacher	39	16
Knowing What Is Taught in School	56	39
Playing Learning Games with Child	52	32
Attending PTA Meetings	78	83
Attending School Performances	82	84
Participating in School Projects	65	33
Observing in the Classroom	87	56
Volunteering in the Classroom	73	39
Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences	18	11
Checking Child's School Work	48	38
Talking with Child About Day	34.5	28
Reading to Child	44	17

For three strategies, Attending Parent-Teacher Organization Meetings, Attending School Performances, and Observing in the Classroom, over 50% of mothers of

peer-models and 75% of the mothers of at-risk students indicated an average-or low-comfort level. When asked to comment further regarding comfort in this area, the mother's lack of time was the most frequent reason given for lack of comfort by both groups regarding attending school performances and attending parent-teacher organization meetings.

Mothers of peer-model students comments concerning parent-teacher organization meetings included:

"You just get home from work, have to get dinner in a hurry and then rush off to school."
"Between school, and church, and work, there seems to be meetings every night. It is sometimes hard to find time just to visit with the family."

In addition to time as an issue with attending meetings or participating in school projects, 44% of the mothers of at-risk students indicated that not knowing what the meeting was about or what would be expected of them at the meeting added to their discomfort. One mother of an at-risk student commented,

"I am never really sure why we are going or what I need to do when I get there."

Another mother of an at-risk student commented about going to meetings about organizing the school carnival:

"The meetings are always interesting when I get there, but I think they would do what they were going to do without me anyway."

Concerning the strategy, Observing in the Classroom, both groups of mothers indicated a problem with time as well

as a problem with feeling as if they were disturbing the classrooms. The mother of an at-risk student commented:

> " Things are just not the same when I am there.
> My child doesn't behave very well, and I don't
> know what to do."

The mother of a peer-model student commented:

> " All the children know me so I don't think they
> behave the same way when I am there than when I am
> not there."

More than 50% of the mothers of at-risk students reported average or low comfort level in five other strategies: Calling Teacher with Questions, Knowing What is Taught in School, Playing Learning Games with Child, Participating in School Projects, and Volunteering in the Classroom.

Again lack of time, due to work schedules or other children at home, was the first response most mothers made when asked to explain their discomfort with volunteering, and participating in school projects. In further discussions, 33% of the mothers of at-risk students stated that transportation was sometimes a problem for them in participating in school projects or in volunteering in the classroom. Seven mothers (30 %) of the at-risk students indicated that not knowing how to handle certain situations in the classroom made them uncomfortable volunteering. One mother commented:

"Even though (the teacher) always tells me what she wants me to do, and she never seems to get frustrated when I can't do it. I just don't know how to handle some of the little things that are always happening."

Calling the teacher with questions was a strategy also reported to be average- or low-comfort level for 57% of the at-risk mothers. Three mothers reported that they did not have easy access to a phone. Eight mothers reported that they worried about disturbing the teacher while she was teaching or while she was at home with her own family. Nine mothers did not know how to get in touch with the teacher during the day. Twelve mothers indicated that there just was not enough time to call teachers in the evening.

Fifty-six percent of the mothers of at-risk students indicated average-or low-comfort level with knowing what was being taught in school. Most of these mothers had no response when asked what would help them know. In both classrooms, parents receive regular letters from the teacher explaining projects and activities that are going on in class. It is interesting to note that only 39% of these mothers indicated that knowing what was taught in school was of greatest importance to helping their child in school.

Playing Learning Games with Child was seen as high importance to 52% of the mothers of at-risk students and was also rated as low- or average-comfort level by 52% of these mothers. Reading with the child was seen as of high importance for 65% of the mothers of at-risk students, yet

44% of these mothers reported average- or low-comfort level
with this strategy.

When asked to discuss the reason for discomfort with
these strategies or indicate ways to make things easier,
responses regarding both strategies were similar. Mothers
of at-risk students initially mentioned time as the greatest
issue. Being busy with work schedules and household duties
interfered with time for reading or playing learning games
with the child. On further discussion, 12 mothers mentioned
that it was difficult for them to read or play games with
their children, because they (the mothers) were too tired
and that caused them to become impatient with the children.
Ten mothers mentioned discipline problems with the child as
being a major issue that prevented them from playing
learning games or reading with the child. Six of these
mothers felt if they would establish a routine, things would
be easier. Four mothers mentioned the fact that they
themselves just didn't like to read.

It is interesting to note the consistency between
strategies that are seen as important and the reported
comfort level regarding those strategies. For example, both
groups rated Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences as being
very important to helping their children in school. Both
groups also rated high comfort levels for this activity. In
other strategies the mothers of at-risk students are more
consistent regarding importance and comfort level. For

example in the strategy, Reading with Child, 65% of these mothers indicated a high degree of importance of this strategy, and 64% reported a high level of comfort. It is an interesting question whether these mothers feel comfortable with what they see is important or whether they see what they believe as important as also being comfortable.

Summary

A significant difference between the two groups was found regarding the importance of the following strategies: Calling Teacher with Questions, Asking for Meetings with Teacher, Attending Parent-Teacher Organization Meetings, and Observing in the classroom. A significant difference between the two groups was found regarding the comfort level with the following strategies: Participating in School Projects and Observing in the Classroom.

Preference for Parent Education Topics

Respondents were asked the general question, "I could help my child more if I knew more about .... " To answer this question, mothers were read a list of 16 topics suitable for parent education classes or workshops and asked to rate each one on a scale of one to five. A rating of one indicated the lowest priority or interest in such a topic,

while a rating of five indicated the highest priority. An
average score was found for each topic for each responding
group. The differences between the means of the two
responding groups was used to compute a $\underline{t}$-value. The
resulting $\underline{t}$-values are listed in Table 21.

Table 21
T-Values for Preference of
Parent Education Topics

Topic	Mean At-Risk	Mean Peer	t-value
How Children Are Taught to Read	4.3	4.0	.9224
What I Can Do at Home to Support My Child's Learning in School	4.61	4.38	1.0352
How Children Are Taught Math in School	4.43	4.55	-.5634
How to Handle My Own Feelings	4.13	3.67	1.1111
How I Am Doing as A Parent	3.43	3.67	-0.5156
How to Manage My Own Time and Energy	3.39	4.00	-1.2494
How to Get My Child to Listen to Me	3.96	4.11	-0.4487
How to Help My Child Control His/Her Temper	4.22	3.55	1.4837
How to Help My Child Behave in Public	3.83	2.78	2.2379 *
What Children Learn At Different Ages	3.74	3.40	-0.6659
How to Teach My Child to Be More Responsible	4.35	4.44	-0.2971
How to Help My Child Feel Good About Him/Herself	4.95	4.11	3.5928 *

Table 21 continued

Topic	Means At-Risk	Means Peer-Model	t-value
How to Help My Child Have Friends	4.13	3.11	2.5209 *
First Aid or CPR For Children	4.26	3.83	1.2948
How to Get Good Child Care	4.17	2.56	4.0070 *
How to Provide Nutritious Meals for the Family	2.87	2.50	.7769

* significant at .05 level, two-tailed, 40 degrees of freedom

When comparing the choices of topics for the two responding groups, it is notable that four of the five top choices are the same for each group. These four topics are: How Children Are Taught to Read, What I can Do at Home to Support My Child's Learning in School, How My Child is Taught Math in School, and How to Teach My Child to Be More Responsible. Two topics, How to Help My Child Behave in Public and How to Provide Nutritious Meals for the Family, appear when comparing the five topics with the lowest ratings by each group.

The 16 topics can be grouped into five categories representing five general areas of parent education: School Learning, Self-Help for Parents, Discipline Issues, General Developmental Issues, and Issues of Family Care. Table 22

lists the topics in each of these areas of interest.

Table 22

Parent Education Topics in General Interest Areas

School Learning
    How Children Are Taught To Read
    What I Can Do At Home to Support My Child's Learning In School
    How Children are Taught Math In School
Self-Help For Parents
    How to Handle My Own Feelings
    How I Am Doing as a Parent
    How to Manage My Own Time and Energy
Discipline Issues
    How to Get My Child to Listen to Me
    How to Help My Child Control His/Her Temper
    How to Help My Child Behave In Public
General Developmental Issues
    What Children Learn at Different Ages
    How to Teach My Child to Be More Responsible
    How to Help My Child Feel Good about Him/Herself
    How Children Learn to Get Along and Have Friends
Issues of Family Care
    First Aid or CPR for Children
    How to Get Good Child Care
    How to Provide Nutritious Meals for the Family

Ratings for each topic in each area were computed for each respondent. A mean score and standard deviation was computed for each topic area for each responding group, and these scores were used to compute a t-value to indicate if there was a significant difference for preference of general topics areas between the two responding groups. Results of this analysis are displayed in Table 23.

Table 23
Comparison of Significance for General
Parent Education Topics

	At-Risk Mothers	Peer Mothers
School Learning		
Mean	4.4496	4.3128
Standard Deviation	0.6489	0.5544
t-value	0.7131	
Parent Self-Help		
Mean	3.6535	3.7756
Standard Deviation	1.1991	0.6865
t-value	-0.3848	
Discipline Issues		
Mean	3.9413	3.4806
Standard Deviation	0.9093	0.9245
t-value	1.5984	
General Development		
Mean	4.2717	3.9583
Standard Deviation	0.5108	0.6820
t-value	1.6837*	
Family Care		
Mean	3.7661	2.9261
Standard Deviation	0.6154	0.9036
t-value	3.5366*	

* significant at .05, 40 degrees of freedom.

There is a significant difference in choices of parent education topics between mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer-model students in two general areas: Family Care Issues and Topics Concerning General Development. Mothers of at-risk students prefer topics in the categories of family care and general development.

<u>Summary</u>

Previously, this study has shown that mothers of at-risk students do not choose to include parent education in the services provided by schools, and they indicated a low level of probable attendance at such activities. Traditionally, parent-education topics are limited to discipline issues. Perhaps mothers of at-risk students are really interested in more generalized topics with less emphasis on discipline. It might be that mothers of at-risk students are uncomfortable attending parent education classes that deal with discipline issues and are also part of the school system.

There were significant differences between the two groups regarding the topics, How to Help My Child Behave in Public, How to Help My Child Feel Good About Him/Herself, and How to Get Good Child Care.

<u>Preferred Ways of Learning</u>

Respondents were given a list of 15 activities commonly used to obtain information about children and how to help children in school. They were asked to rate their preferences for these activities by marking a scale of one to five, one being the lowest priority or the least effective method of learning about their children and how to help their children, and five being the most effective way of learning about their children. Item 7 and item 12,

concerning the use of newsletters and attending school
meetings were dropped from the study because these
activities are not necessarily specific to learning about
children. A t-value was computed to determine if there was
a significant difference between groups. Results are
displayed in the following table.

Table 24
Preference For Ways of Learning

Learning Activity	Mean At-Risk Mothers	Mean Peer Mothers	t-value
Talking with Teachers at Conferences	3.91	4.33	-1.2599
Talking with Teachers on Informal Basis	4.61	4.56	0.2491
Reading Books	3.478	3.694	-0.6048
Parent Education Classes	3.48	3.67	-0.5198
Parent Education Workshops	3.52	3.44	0.2210
Magazine Articles	4.00	3.28	2.0771 *
Television Programs	2.96	2.67	0.6168
Working with Other Parents in the Classroom	2.57	2.44	0.3259
Talking with Relatives and Close Friends	4.522	3.44	3.7980 *
Talking with other Parents at Parent Education Classes	2.57	3.72	-3.0342 *
Playing Learning Games with Child	4.48	3.694	2.7365 *
Reading Pamphlets	3.48	2.61	2.2992 *
Having Home Visits by Teacher	2.70	2.00	1.4644

* significant at .05 level, two-tailed test

Respondents were asked if there were other methods that they used to learn about their children or about how to help their children. Mothers from both groups added that they often observed their children playing with other children. One mother of an at-risk student commented,

> "I just take it from day to day because things change so much from day to day."

Both groups indicated strong preference for talking to teachers during conferences as a way of learning about their children, but both groups preferred talking to the teacher on a more informal basis. Comments about conferences pointed out some discomfort with the formality of the activity. One mother of an at-risk student commented about conferences:

> "The teacher always gives me a lot of information, but it goes so fast, I don't always remember what she says, and I forget to ask questions that I had.

Another parent of at-risk commented also about conferences:

> "There are so many things to discuss. I go in with some questions and I think I get answers, but I am not sure."

Some mothers of peer-model students shared the same experience concerning conferences. For example, one mother of a peer-model student commented,

> "They (conferences) are so formal and it is such a long time in between them, if I didn't have a chance to just talk with (teacher's name) at other times, I really wouldn't know what was going on or how to support (child's name)."

Both groups indicated a low preference for working with other parents in the classroom and watching television as ways to learn about their children.

Summary

It is interesting to note that mothers of at-risk students indicated a preference for talking to close friends or relatives as a way of learning about their children or learning how to help their children, while mothers of peer-model students indicated a preference for talking to parents of similar-aged children to obtain this same information.

Mothers of at-risk students indicated a stronger preference for playing learning games with children. This contradicts the earlier data which indicated peer-models had a greater value for the activity and also a greater comfort level than mothers of at-risk. This might indicate that time to play with children and the knowledge of the kinds of games to play with children, as well as discipline problems with children while playing, may have had more influence over the level of comfort indicated than the attitude toward the value of the activity itself.

In this study, a significant difference was found between the two groups of mothers regarding several learning strategies. These strategies were Reading Magazine Articles, Talking with Close Friends and Relatives, Talking

with Other Parents, Playing Learning Games with Children, and Reading Pamphlets.

Summary of Findings
Regarding Research Hypotheses

H_0 There will be no significant difference between mothers of at-risk students and mothers of peer-model students regarding:

a.   age of mother at birth of first child,   Rejected

b.   preferences for programs and services
     designed to support families,   Retained

c.   potential use of programs and services
     designed to support families,   Rejected

d.   views of the importance of different
     home/school involvement strategies,   Rejected

e.   comfort level with certain home/school
     involvement strategies,   Retained

f.   preference for topics for parent education,   Retained

g.   preference for ways of learning
     about helping their children.   Rejected

The null hypothesis was retained when a significant difference was found in less than 35% of the strategies discussed during the interviews. For example, in the case of preferences for programs and services designed to support families, a significant difference between the preferences of the two groups was found in only 21% of the strategies. Likewise, in the preference for parent education topics, a significant difference was found in only 25% of the topics. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained in both cases.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Research indicates that parents' involvement in
children's education increases children's achievement and
the effectiveness of the schools (Becher, 1984; Henderson,
1987). Teachers and administrators observe that some
parents are readily involved in their children's education,
but many, particularly parents of students designated as
at-risk for school failure, are not. To encourage all
parents to become involved, teachers and administrators need
to create diverse strategies which enhance the skills of all
parents and, therefore, empower them to become involved in
their children's education.

The purpose of this study was to interview mothers of
students enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program to
determine their perceptions of the importance of certain
home/school involvement strategies, their comfort level when
engaged in these strategies, and their ideas concerning what
resources and information they need in order to become more
involved in their children's education.

This chapter presents a summary of the research
procedure, a summary of the findings, a discussion of
implications of the findings, and a discussion of three
trends evident through analysis of findings. In addition,

recommendations for parent-involvement programs in the
public schools and for teacher in-service and pre-service
training, as well as the need for further research, are also
discussed.

Summary of the Research Procedures

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview
guide by first reviewing the literature and then using the
Delphi Technique. The guide was designed to determine
mothers' attitudes and preferences regarding certain
home/school involvement strategies. Mothers of 23 students,
designated to be at-risk for school failure, and mothers of
18 students designated peer-models were interviewed. All
students were enrolled in the Kindergarten Extended
Education Program operated by the Corvallis [OR] School
District.

Interviews were conducted in the school buildings
during the sixth month of the school year. The researcher
took notes during the interviews and also recorded them on
audio tape. Before an analysis was done, these recordings
were used to verify answers given. Responses to open-ended
questions were coded and counts of frequencies of the
different categories of answers were made. Chi square and
t-tests were used at the .05 level to determine if there

were significant differences between the responses of the two groups.

Summary of Findings

Demographics

1) Seventy-four percent of the families of at-risk students have an annual income of $20,000 or less while 17% of the families of peer-model students have an annual income of $20,000 or less.

2) Twenty-six percent of at-risk students and 5% of peer-model students lived in step-families. Thirteen percent of the at-risk students and none of the peer-model students lived with foster families. Thirty-five percent of the at-risk students and 17% of the peer-model students lived in single-parent homes. Twenty-six percent of the at-risk students and 78% of the peer-model students lived with both biological parents.

3) Forty-seven percent of the at-risk students and 16% of the peer-model students were the oldest or only children in their families.

4) The mean age at the birth of the first child for mothers of at-risk students was 19.4 years while the mean age at the birth of the first child of mothers of peer-model students

was 24.3 years. This represents a significant difference at the .10 level.

5) Thirty-nine percent of the mothers of at-risk students had attended or were attending college while 78% of the mothers of peer-model students had attended or graduated from college.

Discussion and Implications

Of all the children born in the United States in the last decade, 25% live in single-parent homes, 22% were born out of wedlock with one-third of these children born to teenage mothers, and one-third will live in a step-family before they reach the age of 18 (Footlick, 1990). It is interesting to note that, in this study, the at-risk population fits these norms more closely than the peer-model population; for example, approximately one-fourth of the at-risk students are currently living in step-families; 35% live in single-parent households; and 26% of these students were reported by their mothers to have been born out of wedlock, all to teenage mothers.

The fact that 74% of the at-risk students in this study lived in single, foster, or step-families indicates that the mothers have had to deal with many transitions and adjustments. To be successful, home/school involvement strategies need to be sensitive to the added stress that

recent or frequent transitions and adjustments place on the family systems. Strategies should help ease stress by helping mothers adjust to new communities or schools and find support systems.

In addition to the high rate of transition present in the families of at-risk students, poverty and age of the mother at the birth of the child are factors that need to be considered when developing home/school involvement strategies. Thirty-five percent of the families of at-risk students in this study have an annual income of less than $10,000. Risk factors leading to school failure occur more frequently among children in families that are poor (Schorr, 1988). Many children of the poor are growing up with parents who are isolated and facing the pressures of economic survival and family maintenance. These parents are often too drained to provide the consistent nurturing, structure, and stimulation that prepares other children for school and for life. Moreover, they often don't have the energy or money to travel to schools.

Home/school involvement strategies may not be the first priority for families of at-risk students. Therefore, these strategies need to be comprehensive. They need to be "wrapped around" or embedded in other services the family needs for survival. Families of at-risk students need to go fewer places and deal with fewer people in order to get

their needs met. When their family maintenance needs are met, home/school involvement can become a priority for these families.

In addition to the stress that poverty places on the family system, the children of the poor may carry the cons quences of poor health due to poor nutrition or lack of prenatal care. This factor is particularly true of children born of teenage mothers. The average age of the mothers of at-risk students in this study was 19.4 years. Children born to teenage mothers are more likely to have delays in cognitive, social, and emotional development than other children (Bermudez and Pardon, 1988). These delays result from the mother's immaturity or lack of readiness to handle the responsibilities of parenthood. Home/school involvement strategies should take into account the mother's need to put her life in order, build confidence in herself and her ability to parent, and establish positive patterns for the future. Therefore, involvement strategies should be a part of an overall comprehensive plan to help strengthen the family system.

In this study, 39% of the mothers of at-risk students had attended or were currently attending college. These mothers have a commitment to education. Therefore, strategies for home/school involvement must support these efforts and capitalize on this commitment to education.

Examples of strategies that would support the mother's educational aspirations would be after-school child care and evening conference times. The fact that so many of the mothers of at-risk students in this study were in college may not be typical of other at-risk populations, but it does indi ate the need for diverse and flexible home/school involvement strategies. Each family's needs are unique and strategies must be varied and flexible enough to deal with these individual differences.

In this study, 52% of the at-risk students had younger siblings. Any intervention strategy will have a positive effect on these younger siblings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, strategies that involve the families of at-risk students in this study will have the potential for involving and effecting many children.

Findings Regarding Attitudinal Variables

1) Mothers of at-risk students visited schools and worked in the classrooms less often than mothers of peer-model students.

2) Lack of time was the reason given most frequently by all mothers for not visiting the classroom.

3) The mothers of at-risk students were less able to articulate a connection between visiting the classroom and children's achievement.

4) The majority of mothers in both groups described
pleasant contacts with the school or teacher that involved
good news about their children's progress or personality.

5) When asked what qualities they looked for in a teacher
for their children, meeting individual differences,
maintaining classroom discipline, and demonstrating patience
were the three qualities mentioned most often by both groups
of mothers.

6) Sixty-two percent of the mothers of at-risk students
reported a negative memory of school. Six percent of
mothers of peer-models reported a negative memory.

7) In 85% of all memories reported, the remembered event
occurred in kindergarten, first, or second grade.

8) The fears both groups of mothers expressed for their
children's education broke into four major categories:

    Influence of a negative peer group
    Disillusionment about school or learning
    Drug abuse
    Poor self concept

9) Mothers of at-risk students were most concerned about
disillusionment pertaining to school or learning, the
possibility of a negative peer group, and the development of
a poor self concept.

10) Mothers of peer-model students were most concerned
about the possibility of future drug use, disillusionment

pertaining to school or learning, and the possibility of a negative peer group.

11) Sixty-four percent of mothers of peer-model students had no reservations regarding their children's probable success in elementary school.

12) Thirty-five percent of the mothers of at-risk students had no reservations regarding their children's probable success in elementary school.

13) Forty-four percent of the mothers of at-risk students focused the reservations they had concerning how well their child would do in elementary school on the quality of the school. Six percent of the mothers of peer-model students focussed any reservations they had on the quality of the schools.

14) Seventy-two percent of the mothers of at-risk students and 40% of the mothers of peer-model students had no prediction as to how well their children would do in middle school.

15) Forty-four percent of the mothers of peer-model students and 13% of the mothers of at-risk students focused reservations towards the children's success in middle school in the adequate preparation done by the schools.

Discussion and Implications

   In this study, the mothers of at-risk students and the
mothers of peer-model students had similar attitudes and
opinions regarding the qualities they wanted in a teacher,
the fears they had for their children's schooling, and the
feelings they had about what makes up pleasant contact with
schools or teachers. Three areas which showed more
diversity between the two groups of mothers were long term
expectations concerning a child's success in school,
memories of the mother's school experience, and the ability
to articulate a connection between the mother's involvement
in school and the child's success in school.

   A family's endorsement of school affects the child's
self esteem, mental health, and long term aspirations
(Lightfoot, 1978). The parents' positive participation in
school sends signals that parents approve of what is going
on there. This is particularly important when the social
network and the style of the school are dissonant with the
child's home and neighborhood. A parent's alienation from
or discomfort with the school communicates to the child that
the school is the enemy. Schools and parents must share a
similar vision and a sense of constancy if the child is to
feel safe enough to learn.

Many of the mothers of at-risk students had negative
memories of school. When parents have residual negative
feelings towards schools stemming from their own experiences
in school, or lower expectations of their children's
abilities to succeed based on lack of faith in the
performance of the school, then the school has an added task
of helping the parent overcome these residual feelings and
negative expectations in order for the child to feel a sense
of continuity between school and home.

Findings in this study show that mothers of at-risk
students generally have lower expectations for their
children's success in school and more negative memories of
their own school experience. Therefore, successful
home/school involvement strategies will be those that
provide information about why parent involvement is
important and what kinds of actions on the part of the
parent, both at home and at school, show the child that
there is continuity between the parents's and the teacher's
wishes for the child. Successful home/school involvement
strategies will also provide parents with specific
information regarding how the school functions and teaches,
thereby building the parent's trust in the school's ability
to teach the child.

The research of Phillips (1985) and her colleagues
concerning parent involvement and student achievement

reinforces the need of schools to create a sense of continuity between home and school. Phillip's findings suggest that it is not simply the amount of time the parent spends interacting in the schools or even the effectiveness of that interaction that makes the difference in student achievement, but it is the parent's actions in the home and positive expectations for the child's achievement that effects school performance.

Findings Regarding Preference for and Use of Programs and Services:

1) Both groups of mothers gave top preference to

parent-teacher conferences

parent volunteer programs

child care during conferences

newsletters

after school programs for children whose parents work.

2) Mothers of at-risk students showed a significantly higher preference for activity guides.

3) Mothers of peer-model students showed a significantly higher preference for parent-teacher organizations and parent education classes.

4) Mothers of at-risk students indicated a
significantly higher probable use of newsletters
and activity guides.

5) Mothers of peer-model students indicated a
significantly higher probable use of parent-teacher
organizations, parent teacher advisory committees,
and parent education workshops and classes.

Discussion and Implications

Mothers of at-risk students in this study generally
indicated a preference for the use of services, such as
newsletters, activity guides, and child care during
conferences. Many of the services they preferred involve
one-way communication, from school to home or from home to
school. Mothers of peer-model students, however, had a
mixed preference of services and programs and indicated a
higher preference for strategies that were social and
involved interactive communication. For example, parent
advisory committees and parent-teacher organizations require
parents to come to school, to interact, to mix ideas with
others.

Successful home/school involvement strategies for
parents of at-risk students need to be sensitive to the
parents' reluctance to interact with schools or with other
parents. Strategies should promote initial two-way

interactions at some level until trust and comfort between parents and teachers and parents and other parents can be established.

Parents of at-risk students may benefit from the experience of interacting and planning with a small group of parents they know in the presence of teachers they already trust before they are expected to feel comfortable working with a large group of parents that represent the whole school.

Findings Regarding Importance and Comfort Level of Home/School Involvement Strategies

1) Both groups of mothers rated the strategies Parent-Teacher Conferences and Reading to the Child as being very important.

2) Next to Parent-Teacher Conferences and Reading to the Child, mothers of at-risk children rated the strategies Checking the Child's Work, Talking to the Child About the Day, and Playing Learning Games With the Child as the most important strategies they could use to help the child succeed in school.

3) Next to Parent-Teacher Conferences and Reading to the Child, mothers of peer-model students rated the strategies Attending Performances, Asking for Meetings With Teachers, and Calling Teachers About

Questions as the most important in regard to helping their

children succeed in school.

4) Both groups rated Attending Parent-Teacher

Organization Meetings, Participating in School

Projects, and Participating in Group Decisions among

the least important strategies in regard to helping

their children succeed in school.

5) Both groups of mothers indicated a high degree of

comfort level with Parent-Teacher Conferences.

6) A significant difference between groups was noted

regarding their comfort level with

>Playing Learning Games

>Participating in School Projects

>Observing in the Classroom

>Reading to the Child.

Mothers of peer-model students indicated a higher

level of comfort with all the above strategies.

7) Lack of time was the most frequently given first

explanation for lack of comfort given by both

groups regarding all strategies.

Discussion and Implications

Over 50% of the mothers of at-risk students reported

average- or low-comfort level with 8 of the 13 strategies

listed. Seven of those strategies call for a moderate or

would also reinforce parents' abilities and roles as teachers to their children.

It is important to discuss the issue of time. The lack of time, either because of work or school schedules, was the most frequent reason given for the lack of comfort with any of the home/school involvement strategies. This was true for mothers of at-risk students as well as mothers of peer-model students. When mothers were asked to further discuss the lack of time, another issue was often revealed. In some cases this issue concerned child discipline, and in some cases it concerned lack of social comfort. It may be that "lack of time" is really a mask for lack of discipline skills, lack of confidence, or lack of assertiveness. Helping mothers gain confidence in their abilities to work with their children is a priority goal for home/school involvement strategies.

The third theme present in this study is the need for schools to foster two-way communication between home and school. In many cases, mothers of at-risk students chose strategies and programs, such as the activity guide and newsletters, that made them passive recipients of information. Sending home a list of ideas for working with children may not be effective. Mothers of at-risk students may not be likely to do things they never thought were important just because the school says to. Home/school

involvement strategies should engage parents and teachers in two-way communications. Parents should be asked often what they want or expect the school to do for their children and schools should give parents specific ideas and skills that they can use to help further mutual goals.

Parents also need specific information from schools explaining why their involvement is important and why certain strategies, such as reading to the child, help children learn. When parents are active in voicing their ideas and needs for their children, they become empowered and, consequently, more able to help their children in the future.

Recommendations

Children will be more effective learners if there is continuity between goals of the family and the goals of the school (Lightfoot, 1978). In order to create this continuity, schools and community agencies need to view the child in the context of the family and the family in the context of its surroundings. Schools need to be involved in providing comprehensive family support, particularly to families of at-risk students. In order to provide this support, the use of class time and teachers' time needs to be rearranged in such a way as to allow teachers or

home/school liaisons to work with families in interactive
ways.

Recommendations to Schools

1) Collaborate with community agencies to provide
comprehensive services for families of at-risk students.

2) Foster two-way communication between school and parents
in order to build continuity and common goals.

3) Give parents specific information as to what activities
help their children learn and why these activities help
learning.

4) Provide opportunities for parents to build their own
skills and confidence in working with their children.

5) Reorganize the time-commitment priorities of school
personnel to include working with families.

Recommendations for Teacher Education

1) Provide teachers with training for working with groups
of adults.

2) Help teachers formulate two-way communication systems.

3) Help teachers adjust time priorities to include family
activities.

Recommendations for Further Research

1) Investigate the effectiveness of using two-way communication systems to build continuity and common goals between home and school.

2) Investigate the relationship between the social skills on mothers of at-risk students and their level of home-school involvement.

3) Investigate the actual use of the strategies preferred by the mothers of at-risk students in this study.

4) Investigate the relationship between support groups among mothers of at-risk students and levels of home/school involvement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beฝcher, R., (1984). <u>Parent involvement: A review of research and principles of successful practice.</u> Washington DC: National Institute of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 247 032).

Becker, H. J., & Epstein, J.L., (1982). <u>Influences on teacher use of parent involvement</u> (Report 324). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Bermudez, A.D., & Pardon, Y.N., (1985). An evaluation of educational programs for parents of minority children. In R.Duhon (Ed.). <u>Reflections of multicultural education, Vol 1</u> (pp 36 - 41). Lafayette, LA: McNeese State University.

Borg, W.R., & Gall, M.D., (1989). <u>Educational research: An introduction.</u> New York: Longman.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1974). <u>A report on longitudinal evaluations of preschool programs.</u> Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: Office of Child Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 093 501).

Caldwell, B., (1968). The fourth dimension in early childhood education. In R. Hess & R. Bear (Eds.). <u>Early education: Current theory, research, and action.</u> Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

Chavkin, N. F., & Williams, D.L., (1987). Enhancing parent involvement: Guidelines for access to an important resource for school administrators. <u>Education and urban society,</u> 19: 164-84.

Coleman, J., Campbell, E.Q., Hobson, C.J., McPartland, J., Mood, A.M., Weinfield, F.D., & York, R.L., (1966). <u>Equality of educational opportunities.</u> Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.

Corvallis School District 509J. (1989a). Youth at risk report. Unpublished Report. Corvallis OR.

Corvallis School District 509J. (1989b). Report on full-day kindergarten pilot. Unpublished Report. Corvallis OR.

Epstein, J.L., (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. The Elementary School Journal, 86, 277-94.

Foollick, J.K., (1990). What happened to the family? Newsweek Special Issue. Vol. CXIV No.27. 14-19.

Fullman, M., (1985). Change processes and strategies at the local level. Elementary School Journal, 85, 391-422.

Gordon, I., (1978). What does research say about the effects of parent involvement on schooling. Paper presented at annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hawley, W., & Rosenberg, S., (1983). Educational strategies that increase student academic achievement (report no.234) US Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation: Washington D C.

Henderson, A.T., (1987). The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement. Columbia MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Herman, J.L., & Yeh, J.P., (1983). Some effects of parent involvement in schools. The Urban Review, 15, 11-17.

Jencks, C., Smith, M., Acland, H., Barne, B., & Michelson, S., (1972). Inequality: A reassesment of family and society in America. New York: Basic Books.

Lazar, I., (1983). Discussion and implications of the findings. In The Consortium of Longitudinal Studies (Ed.). How the twig is bent. Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Leitch, M.L., & Tangri, S.S., (1988). Barriers to home-school collaboration. Educational Horizons. W:88. 70-78.

Lightfoot, S., (1978). Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools. New York: Basic Books.

McDill, E. L., & Rigsby, M.E., (1969). Educational climates of high schools: Their effects and sources. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Center the Study of the Social Organization of Schools.

Moles, O.C. (1982). Synthesis of recent research on parent participation in children's education. Educational Leadership, 40, 44-47.

Mowry, C. of Medcal Educational Associates, Inc. Denver, Colorado, (1972). Investigation of the effects of parent participation in Head Start: Non-technical report. Washington DC. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Phillips, S.D., Smith, M.C. & Witte, J.F., (1985). Parents and Schools: Staff report to the Study Commission on the quality of education in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Schools. Milwaukee, WI.

Powell, D.R., (1988). Parent education as early childhood intervention: Emerging directions in theory, research, and Practice. Norwood NJ: Ablex.

Purkey, S.C., & Smith, M.S., (1983). Effective schools: A review. Elementary School Journal, 83, 427-452.

Royce, J.M., Darlington, R.B., & Murray, H.W., (1983). Pooled Analysis: Findings across studies. In The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (ED.). How the twig is bent. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Schorr, L.B., (1988). <u>Within our reach: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage.</u> New York: Doubleday.

Wagenaar, T.C., (1977). <u>School achievement level vis-a-vis community involvement and support: An empirical assessment.</u> Paper presented at annual meeting of American Sociological Association. (ERIC document reproduction service no. ED 146 111).

Walberg, H., (1984). Improving the productivity of America's schools. <u>Educational Leadership, 41:8,</u> 24-30.

Weikart, D.R., & Lambie,D.A., (1968). Prschool intervention through home teaching program. In J. Hellmuth (Ed.). <u>Disadvantaged child Vol. 2: Head Start and early intervention.</u> New York:Brunner.

Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio State University, (1969). <u>The impact of Head Start: An evaluation of the effects of Head Start on children's cognitive and affective development.</u> Springfield VA: Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information.

White, B., (1985). <u>The Center for Parent Education Newsletter.</u> Newton, MA.: Center for Parent Education. October 1985.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PART I

<u>To the Respondent:</u>

Parents are very important to a child's success in school. The purpose of this interview is to get information about how you feel about schools and determine ways in which you feel schools can be supportive of your efforts to help your child succeed in school.

1) Tell me about (child's name).
   How long has she (he) been in school here?
   How does she (he) like it?

   a) Have you visited your child's school?   How often?

   b) What made you decide to visit?

   c) Have you ever wanted to visit the school but didn't?

   d) Why?

   e) What is there about the school that makes you feel "at home"?

   f) Is there anything about a school that "puts you off"; makes you not want to come?

2.

   a) What qualities do you think make a good teacher for your child?

   b) Do you feel free to contact your child's teacher?

c) Would you like more contact with your child's teacher?

d) Describe how you would like to meet with your child's teacher and what you would like to talk about?

e) Describe the most pleasant conversation or contact you have had with ANY teacher or school regarding your child.

f) Describe the most unpleasant contact or conversation you have had with ANY teacher or school regarding your child.

3.

a) What is your strongest memory of your elementary school experience?

b) How do you think your child will do in elementary school?

c) In middle school and high school?

d) What is your greatest fear for your child as far as his/her schooling goes?

e) What do you think is the most important thing you can do to help your child succeed in school?

f) What do you need in order to do this?

g) What could the schools do to make this easier?

4.

a) How does your child spend his time at home?

b) What kind of activities do you do with your child?

c) Which of these activities do you think are helping your child learn?

d) Are there activities that you think would help your child learn but that you don't like to do with him/her?
What are they?

e) Why do you not like to do them with your child?

f) What would make it easier?

g) When your child gets older, say third or fourth grade, how do you think the time you spend with him/her at home will change?

h) Are you prepared to spend some time at home helping your child with school work?

i) What do you think the school might do to help you help your child with his/her school work?

5.

a) Do you work in your child's classroom?

b) Why or Why not? (What are the benefits to you?)

c) If you would like to but don't, what stands in your way?

d)   Are you interested in doing other things in the
        school, or maybe for the school but at home?

e)   What would you like to do?

f)   If you would like to but don't, what hinders you?

g)   Is child care a problem when trying to attend
school functions?

h)   How important is it to you to have both parents
        involved in the child's schooling?

Part II

<u>To the Respondent:</u>
If you were principal of the school, which programs and
activities would you have for parents and their children?
Which of these programs would you use as a parent?

                    School should offer   I would use

Child care during
conferences   y n   y n

Parent Education   y n   y n
     classes   y n   y n
     workshops   y n   y n

Parent Room (with resources)   y n   y n

Newsletters   y n   y n

PTA or PTO   y n   y n

After School programs
for children whose parents work   y n   y n

Parent volunteer programs   y n   y n

Parent-to-parent support groups   y n   y n

Special support groups for single
parents   y n   y n

Activities and guides for parents
to use with children during
holidays,breaks, and summers   y n   y n

Parent Advisory Committees   y n   y n

Home Visits by teachers   y n   y n

Parent-Teacher conferences   y n   y n

Ideas of ways I can help school
from home   y n   y n

ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS YOU SEE AS HELPFUL?

Would you like these programs   day?   evenings?
Saturday?

PART III
To the Respondent

I have a list of activities that I am going to read to you
one at a time and ask you to tell me:
1) How important do you think this activity is in
helping your child suceed in school?
2) How comfortable do you feel with this activity?
3) If you think it is important, but you are not
comfortable - what would make it easier?

SCALE

Not Important	Average Importance	Very Important
N	A	V

Not Comfortable	Average Comfort	Very Comfortble
NC	AC	VC

1) Checking the child's school work

How Important	NI	AI	VI
Are you Comfortable	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

2) Reading to child

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

3) Listening to child read

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

4) Attending parent teacher conferences?

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

5)   Talking about child's day with child
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC

What would make it easier?

6)   Calling the child's teacher when you have questions
about child's progress or behavior
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC
What would make it easier?

7)   Knowing what is being taught in school
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC

What would make it easier?

8)   Asking for meetings with teacher
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC

What would make it easier?

9)   Volunteering in the classroom
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC
What would make it easier?

10)   Attending PTA (PTO) Meetings
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC
What would make it easier?

11) Playing learning games with child
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC
What would make it easier?

12)   Helping child learn specific skills
                           Importance   NI   AI   VI
                           Comfort   NC   AC   VC
What would make it easier?

13) Attending a school meeting (open House)

Importance	NI	AI	I
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

14) Observing in the classroom

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	

What would make it easier?

15) Participating in school projects

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

16) Participating in school decisions

Importance	NI	AI	VI
Comfort	NC	AC	VC

What would make it easier?

PART IV

<u>To the Respondent:</u>
Here is a list of common concerns we all have about
children's learning, discipline, and family matters.
Indicate which items you would most like to spend some time
reading about or discussing with others by ranking them 1 -
5, 1 being of lowest interest and 5 being of highest
interest.

I could help my child more if I knew more about

1) How children are taught to read in school.

    1   2   3   4   5

2) How to handle my own feelings.
    1   2   3   4   5

3) How to provide nutritious meals for my family.

    1   2   3   4   5

4) How to get my child to listen to me.

    1   2   3   4   5

5) The kinds of things children learn at different ages.

    1   2   3   4   5

6) How I am doing as a parent.

    1   2   3   4   5

7) First aid or CPR for children.

    1   2   3   4   5

8) How to help my child control his/her temper.

    1   2   3   4   5

9) How to manage my time and energy better.

    1   2   3   4   5

10) How to help my child behave in public.

    1   2   3   4   5

11) How children are taught math in school.

    1   2   3   4   5

12) How children learn to get along with others and have friends.

    1   2   3   4   5

13) How to get good child care.

    1   2   3   4   5

14) How to teach my child to be more responsible.

    1   2   3   4   5

15) What kinds of things I can do at home to support my child's learning in school.

    1   2   3   4   5

16) How to help my child feel good about him/herself.

    1   2   3   4   5

1) Are there areas in which you would like help for your child?
   If yes, what are they?

2) Are there areas in which you would like help for yourself?
   If yes, what are they?

PART V
To the Respondent:

Below are ways to find out about your children, how to help them with their behavior, how to help them do better in school, etc.
Indicate which help you the most by ranking them 1 to 5, 1 being least effective and 5 being most effective.

1) Talking with teachers at conferences

   1   2   3   4   5

2) Talking with teachers at other times, more informally

   1   2   3   4   5

3) Reading books on how to teach your child or
        manage his/her behavior at home

   1   2   3   4   5

4) Taking parent education classes

   1   2   3   4   5

5) Attending short (2 hour) programs on child discipline

   1   2   3   4   5

6) Reading magazine articles on helping children learn

   1   2   3   4   5

7) Reading the school newsletter

   1   2   3   4   5

8) Watching TV shows about how children learn or
        how to discipline children

   1   2   3   4   5

9) Working with other parents in the classroom

   1   2   3   4   5

10) Talking with relatives or close friends

1   2   3   4   5

11) Talking with other parents at group meetings

1   2   3   4   5

12) Attending school meetings

1   2   3   4   5

13) Reading pamphlets

1   2   3   4   5

14) Playing games with my child

1   2   3   4   5

15) Having a teacher or other school person visit in my home

1   2   3   4   5

OTHER

PART VI:
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1) What is your relationship to (child's name).
   Mother   father   grandmother   foster mother   other

2) Describe your educational background.
             some high school
             High school diploma or GED
             some college
             Bachelor's degree
             Graduate school or graduate degree

3) Describe the make up of your household.
             one parent family
             two parent family
             step-family
             grandparents' custody
             other

4) Who in your household takes the major responsibility for
   communicating with the school?

5) How are the adults in the family employed?

6) Ages and sex of children living in the home

7) Ethnic background
             Afro-American
             Spanish Speaking
             Asian or Pacific Islander
             Native American
             White/Caucasian
             Other

8) Family Income Level
             Less than 10,000
             10,001 -20,000
             20,001 - 35,000
             35,000 - 50,000
             Over 50,000

9) What was the age of mother at birth of this child?
   First child?

MEMBERS OF THE DELPHI PANEL

Lynn Lahey, Principal and Chair,
Full-Day Kindergarten Committee
Inavale School
Corvallis School District 509J

Bobbie Weber
Chair, Department of Family Resources
Linn-Benton Community College

Claudia Raleigh
Teacher, Full-Day Kindergarten
Corvallis School District 509J

Judy Issacson
Principal, Green Acres Elementary School
Lebanon School district

Dr. Sam Vuchinich
Department of Human Development and Family Sciences
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon

Kevin DeCoster
Substance Abuse Specialist
Corvallis School District, 509 J

Maryanne Dengler, MSW
Home School Laison
Corvallis School District 509 J

Dr. Harry Barnnet
Statistical Consultant
Alburn, Washington

APPENDIX C

FIRST LETTER TO DELPHI PANEL

November 4, 1989

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of the DELPHI Panel which is developing a questionnaire to use during a semi-structured interview of parents of primary school children. As we discussed earlier, this questionnaire will be used as the data collection instrument in a descriptive study the goal of which is to describe parent involvement as it relates to parents of primary school children who have been identified as "at risk" by their school district.

The specific research questions are outlined on a separate form which is enclosed. The purpose of the DELPHI process is to create an instrument that generates that data necessary to answer these questions. The results of this study will be used in two ways. The first use will be to design specific strategies aimed at increasing the level of involvement of parents in the education of their children. A second use will be to design inservice and preservice training objectives for teacher education courses.

The first draft of the interview guide, which you are now receiving, contains a list of items generated from the literature and intended to answer the research questions. You will notice that this list is very lengthy. This initial round of the DELPHI process asks each panel member to react to each item to determine the appropriateness of wording and whether there is ambiguity or redundancy within the listing of potential items. You are asked to react to each item according to the following scale:

Retain_____

Reject _____

Retain with the following modification(s) __

_____

I encouraged you to contribute new items for the questionnaire where needed.

The second and third (if necessary) rounds utilize a five (5) point scale to ascertain the importance of each item which was retained or retained through modification in the initial phase. I will continue correspondence with each panel member until group consensus is met. Consensus is considered established when the response of panel members as a group are in agreement 80% of the time. Items will be considered as being appropriate for inclusion in the interview guide when the importance mean is rated at or above 3.5 on the scale.

If possible, please return this first round questionnaire to me by November 15th. I do understand how busy your schedule must be at this time of the year, and I do appreciate your time and effort on behalf of this project. Please call if you have any questions. I can be reached either at Linn-Benton Community College 928-2361 x389, or at Oregon State University 737-3648.

Thank you.

Judith Kieff

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

College of Education

Oregon State University