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Dear PTA Partners of Wisconsin,

The School, Family & Community Partnership Committee (*SFCPC) of the WI PTA State Board (formerly known as; Parent Involvement Committee) is proud to offer to each PTA Unit & Council in Wisconsin this collection of resources for developing a meaningful partnership in your community. Our committee is focused on the goal of developing meaningful partnerships in each of our PTAs during our term. We will be providing all of our PTAs more information on this subject & we will be referring to this PTA resource manual throughout the year. We encourage each local PTA to share this manual with your membership & to keep the manual available for parents, teachers & administration to view throughout the year.

WI PTA State Board is a partner in the State & National Network of Partnership Schools led by the research of Dr. Joyce Epstein & her Six Types of Involvement. You will find numerous papers & reports in this PTA resource manual on this successful program that originated with the Johns Hopkins Research Group. If your school is not a member of the State Partnership, your PTA may also join by contacting the WI Department of Public Instruction & speaking with Ruth Anne Landsverk 608.266.9757 or Jane Grinde. 608.266.3390 or call toll free at 800.441.4563 There is additional information on their website www.dpi.state.wi.us

This resource manual was at one time a vision of my predecessor, Pam Johnson, '97-'99 State PTA Parent Involvement Commissioner. Pam collected & compiled information in your *SFCP Manual that will help give you data on:

- Why it is important for parent involvement
- How you can survey your community & assess what you need to address to form a meaningful partnership
- Practical "how-to tips" to accomplish a meaningful partnership to assure the success of ALL children

All of us send a big "Thanks Pam." You have truly set a strong foundation for future commissioners to build on & the children of Wisconsin will reap the rewards of your work.

Looking forward to the new school year, we need to ask ourselves, who is raising our children? Much of what makes a difference in how our kids do in school happens outside of school. Can we expect a teacher to drop by in the evening, turn off the TV & send our kids to bed? Or provide a quiet place for our child to study? Can we expect our child's teacher to make sure an after school job doesn't absorb all of the child's energy? Or that every child starts off the day with breakfast?

Most kids are in contact with their teachers for less than one-third of the day and fewer than 195 days a year. So most of their learning takes place out of school - on the parent's watch. What happens during this time makes the difference. Parents need to speak positively of school & teachers. Parents need to set up an 'special area' for your child to do homework. Parents need to encourage positive interactive conversation about the child's school day daily. Talks, trips & little lessons add up & give kids a real competitive edge. Meet your child's teacher & let him/her know that you are there to work with the school on meeting the needs of your child. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Being involved in your child's education does not always mean that you need be inside the school.

Working for the success of ALL children, your WI PTA -*SFCPC Committee,

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*SFCPC note- School, Family, and Community Partnership Committee You can remember the name by using the acronym SFCPC for San Francisco California Pacific Coast

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Compiled by: WI PTA SFC Partnership Committee

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WI PTA State Schools, Families & Community Partnership Committee (SFCPC)

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And YOU!

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is the participation of parents in every facet of the education and development of children from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children's lives. Parent involvement takes many forms, including the parents' shared responsibilities in decisions about children's education, health, and well-being, as well as the parents' participation in organizations that reflect the community's collaborative aspirations for all children.

THE POWER OF PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Setting a high standard for parent involvement projects will boost student achievement

by Anne T. Henderson, Karen Jones, and Beverly Raimondo

Ever since *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, our country has been grappling with serious school reform. At the close of the century, we still have far to go. Beyond any doubt, the research shows that involving parents improves student achievement. Yet few schools engage parents as real partners in school improvement, and district-wide reform efforts rarely take parents seriously. Could there be a connection between the lag in results and the fact that so few parents are involved?

Yes, there is a connection, and concerned parents, educators, and others are trying to do something about it. In 1997, a national meeting was held on engaging parents in school reform. The report from that meeting is called *Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform*. It describes eight schools in poor neighborhoods that have raised student achievement to high levels. They did it by working closely with their families. In these schools, parents sit on governing councils, take part in standards committees, and analyze school data. They also help write school policy, assess student portfolios, and press district and state officials for more resources.

Even the strongest school-reform legislation can't make a difference without parent involvement. The state of Kentucky has a far-reaching school reform law that sets high standards for all students, provides help to schools to carry out those standards, and assesses student progress every year. Yet this law will not work, and students won't learn at high levels, unless families can take part in the ways described in *Urgent Message*.

A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP

How can we help them do this? In Kentucky, the state PTA and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence have become partners. Together, they have created the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL). CIPL has already trained 300 parents across the state. To become CIPL fellows, parents must commit to attending three two-day training sessions, offered in different regions of the state. They also agree to design and carry out a project in their local community.

CIPL has set high standards for these parent projects. Each project must be designed to improve student achievement, involve more parents, and have a lasting impact. To help participants, CIPL developed a scoring guide for partnership projects. CIPL hopes the standards can serve as guidelines for those promoting parent involvement in other states.

HOW DO THE PROJECT STANDARDS WORK?

- 1. Will the project improve student achievement?** Projects should try to improve conditions that lead to low grades and test scores. This should raise achievement to a higher level. Why write a school handbook if more than half the kids in the school are reading at the lowest level? Each project must address these questions:
 - *Is the project based on real data or information about student achievement in your school or district? Does it meet a real need? How do you know?*
 - *Does the project aim to improve the quality of student work? Will you and others be looking at student work to see if the project has an impact? How will you do this? What impact will this have?*
 - *Does the project refer to high academic standards? How will it promote understanding of higher standards in the school community? How will it help parents, teachers, and students tell if students are working at a high level?*
 - *Why will the project improve student achievement? Is the link between the project activities and improved student achievement clear and direct? How will it improve student learning? Why do you think so?*
- 2. Will the project increase parent involvement?** It's important to go beyond the parents who are always involved. Questions like these must be addressed:
 - *Will you engage all types of parents in the school community? Will you be working with parents who are not involved? Are there parents who will not be reached by the project? Why? Who are they?*
 - *Will at least one-third of the families in the school be involved? Will you be involving the parents who can have an impact on the problem your project is addressing?*
 - *How will you reach out to the families you want to include? Do you think your approach will work? Why?*
- 3. Will the project have a lasting impact?** Often, projects tend to be one-time events such as an open house, a reading night, a family fun fair, a science exhibit. What kind of effect do you want to have? Consider these questions:
 - *Will the project activities extend at least two years? If not, will they have an impact that will last after the activities are done?*

- *If your project is an event, will it happen at least three times during the school year? Will there be activities between the events? Will key people in the school community be involved (e.g. the PTA, custodial staff, principal, student group, school council)? Will it help other activities or events in the school be more successful?*
- *Will the project become part of standard practice in the school? Could it easily be adopted by the school? Will it be part of the school improvement plan?*

SCORING PARENT PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

To help parents, family members, and community people think about these questions, we have developed a scoring guide (see box). It is based on the four levels of performance used in Kentucky: novice (beginner), apprentice (starting to learn), proficient (learning well), and distinguished (at the highest level).

First, think about a project that is already underway. Bring a few people together to talk about how it's going. Place a check by the statements in the scoring guide that you think best answer the questions in the first column. To

be proficient or distinguished, all but one or two checks should fall in those columns. This scoring process should result in an interesting discussion.

Now think about a project being planned. Which statements best describe how the project is designed? Use the statements in the guide as tips for increasing the project's impact. Almost any project can have a positive effect on how well our kids do in school, if it pays attention to these three standards. What could be more important? **OC**

Anne T. Henderson is the author or coauthor of many books and other materials about parent, family, and community involvement in education. These include Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform, A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement, and Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents, available from the Center for Law and Education in Washington, DC. Karen Jones, president of the Kentucky PTA, is a public relations and outreach officer for the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service. Beverly Raimondo is the founder and director of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL), a major project of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a statewide citizens' advocacy group in Kentucky. CIPL is supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Kellogg Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and the DeWitt Wallace Foundation.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROJECT SCORING GUIDE

Standard	Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
1. Is the project focused on improving student achievement?	I. Project is based on at least three sources of data or information (e.g. state test scores, school improvement plan, school survey) II. Parents, teachers and students will look at a wide range of student work III. Project will help people understand how standards are used in the classroom and whether student work meets standards IV. Project design is clearly linked to improving student achievement	I. Project is based on at least two sources of information or data II. Some parents and teachers will look at student work in one or two subjects in a few grades III. Project will show how standards are reflected in student work IV. The design may have an impact on student achievement	I. Project is based on some information, but not very thorough II. Looking at student work is not a main feature of the project III. The link to standards is not clear IV. The case for how the project will improve student achievement is not clear	I. Project is based on scanty or vague information II. Looking at student work is not a priority III. Project does not refer to standards IV. Project is not designed to improve student achievement
2. Will the project increase parent involvement?	I. All types of families in the community will be reached II. Project will engage at least 1/3 of school families III. Families most in need are main target IV. Project will reach families not now involved	I. Many families in school community will be reached II. Project will have some personal contact with about 1/3 of families III. Families most in need are part of target group IV. Outreach strategy will work with most families	I. Some families not now involved will be reached II. Project will get information to some families III. No special effort to reach families most in need IV. Outreach strategies are traditional (fliers, newsletter)	I. Project will involve only the usual suspects II. Information is hit-or-miss III. Families most in need not part of strategy IV. No outreach
3. Will the project have a lasting impact?	I. Activities will extend at least two years II. Events scheduled at least three times during school year, with activities in between. All key players involved III. Project will be adopted by school. There is a plan for making that happen	I. Some activities will last two years II. Events will happen three times during first school year. Some key players involved III. Project will probably be accepted by the school	I. Activities will last one year II. One or two events, with some activity between. Only a few people are responsible III. School is not committed to continuing the project	I. Project is a single event or product II. Project is very dependent on one or two people III. School leaders are not interested in project

SCHOOL REFORM

SCHOOL REFORM

This special issue of Our Children is devoted to the subject of school reform. Obviously, this topic is too large—and too ill-defined—to be dealt with here in its entirety, even with the eight extra pages we have added to the magazine this issue to help us explore it. But what follows is our effort to provide some perspective on school reform as it affects parents, children, schools, and public education in general. Though they are by no means comprehensive, the different articles presented here touch on some of the key issues in the great public discussion on school reform that is going on in schools and communities across the nation.

While not every piece in this issue is focused on school reform, we have tried to make it easy for readers to follow the special material by marking pages with a distinctive school reform “stamp.” We hope you find what follows to be useful, informative, and provocative—in the sense that it provokes thoughts and discussions among our readers. As with each issue of Our Children, we look forward to hearing your responses.



Jeff Zar
Stone Images

AND PARENTS

What is school reform anyway? For a term that seems to be on the lips of every parent, professional educator, academic expert, and politician in the entire country, how can we be sure we all mean the same thing when we say "school reform"? The fact is that very often we don't. School reform is an umbrella term for a sprawling assortment of programs, theories, initiatives, and practices that all touch on how schools are organized, administered, and funded. School reform—as some people use the term—touches on how students learn, how teachers teach, how principals administer, and how communities, states, and even the federal government provide direction and support for what happens in school. All too frequently, school reform seems to mean all things to all people, when those people are talking about improving public education.

This last point is crucial. If there's one thing everyone seems to share in common when talking about this subject, it's the desire to improve public education. Whether people are critical or supportive of our present education system, everyone would like to see our schools be as good as they can possibly be. It is the differences of opinion over how to achieve that goal that leads to the ever-expanding breadth of different ideas the term school reform covers.

School reform inside and out

For the purpose of lending a little clarity to our understanding of what school reform is and how it works, it's worth considering that there are two distinct kinds of school reform. One deals with what information schools teach and how they teach it, and is concerned chiefly with what and how students are taught. As such it involves mostly what goes on inside schools, especially inside classrooms. This type of school reform encompasses changes in school curriculum, the use of new technologies in classrooms, and even the adoption of standards for teaching different subject areas. The second major kind of school reform deals more with how schools are organized and managed, and what different roles teachers, administrators, and community people play in those processes. Examples of this kind of reform are site-based management and the use of local school councils. Of course, there are numerous

school reform initiatives that could be conceived as somewhere between these two poles, or as combinations of both.

Why school reform—and how

School reform has been taking place in one fashion or another since universal public education was established in this country in the 19th century. As long as we have had such schools, we have been working to make them better. But it's surprising to consider the many ways in which today's schools are similar to those of a century ago, especially when compared to how other such major public institutions have been transformed. In many ways our public schools are still structured to accommodate the agricultural lifestyle of most Americans in the late 1900s.

SCHOOL REFORM ISSUE-IN-BRIEF

EDUCATION STANDARDS

There is considerable debate about whether the United States should establish national, state, and local standards for what students should know and be able to do as a result of their schooling. Supporters see standards as a way of improving our schools by providing targets at which to aim. Critics see standards as a step toward a national curriculum and testing program that would usurp local control and weaken community efforts to improve education.

In an effort to define educational standards, the National Council on Education Standards and Testing has recommended the following distinctions: Content standards describe what students should know and be able to do relative to a particular academic area. Performance standards describe the levels of competence or proficiency expected for satisfactory or exemplary performance. Delivery standards describe a school's capability to provide students with opportunities and resources to reach high performance standards. These definitions allow educators, school board members, parents, and students to speak the same language when discussing the merits of educational standards. Whether educational standards are developed at the national, state, or local level, one thing is certain—shared standards that describe clear, agreed-upon targets and define proficient performance will serve a useful purpose. Students will know what they need to learn to reach their goals, and the public will have a more accurate means to judge the effectiveness of their schools.

Adapted from the Pennsylvania Coalition for Public Education Information Series.

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In other ways, schools have changed significantly over the past three or four decades, just as society has changed. The late 1960s and 1970s, in particular, saw the onset of many school reform efforts. But it has been since the publication of the Department of Education report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, that the quality of America's public schools has become a hotly debated public—and political—issue. Over the past 14 years public schools have been strongly attacked from different quarters, while others have just as strenuously defended them. Too often, the issues of school reform and school improvement have been caught up in partisan political debate. There is all too little common ground in these debates. Even the value of “public” education in general has been questioned. But there are a few points on which it seems everyone concerned can agree. One is that making schools better is of the utmost importance to our entire society. Another is that one of the best ways to accomplish this aim is for parents and families to become more involved in their children's educations.

The key role of parents

According to a recent poll cosponsored by the National PTA (see *Our Children*, March/April 1997, page 25), 94 percent of registered voters agree that society cannot make any progress on education issues without first involving parents in the process. Research study after research study has shown that

parent involvement is directly linked to student success, quality schools, and effective reform. In fact, these studies show that parent involvement has the potential to be far more effective than any other type of education reform measure. The most comprehensive survey of this research is a series of publications developed by Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla: *The Evidence Grows* (1981); *The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987); and *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* (1995). Citing more than 85 studies performed over 30 years, these publications document the profound benefits for students, families, and schools when parents participate in their children's education. According to Henderson and Berla, “The evidence is now beyond dispute. When parents are involved in their children's education, their children do better in school.” Among their findings:

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.

A PTA FOCUSES ON STRUGGLING STUDENTS

School reform in the United States has taken many forms, but one common denominator behind many successful efforts is parent involvement. Today, in schools across the country parents and PTA members are taking the lead to improve their schools, by getting involved in creative ways to help children in school. One such effort is taking place at McKinley Middle School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Three years ago, when Sharon Harschnek was appointed volunteer coordinator for the McKinley PTA, she learned there were many students who needed extra help to stay afloat academically. She also knew several parents who wanted to be more actively involved in the school. She helped put these two groups together and created the McKinley FOCUS program, a tutoring program for students who were struggling academically but who did not qualify for any special assistance programs. According to Harschnek, the

name “FOCUS” was selected because it embodied the principal goal of the program—to focus students' attention on what they need to do to improve.

FOCUS has more than tripled in scale since it was created in 1994, and in the process gained the wholehearted support of the school administration and faculty. This year 35 students and 20 tutors participate. The program serves students in grades 6-8 and uses volunteers from the PTA and the community as tutors. Participating students met with their tutors for 40 minutes every school day.

How the program works

According to Harschnek, the program is structured around four main goals:

- Help the students become better organized.
- Assist students with follow-through (completing assignments, preparing for class and tests).

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

- Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- The benefits of involving parents lead to significant gains at all ages and grade levels.
- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- Schools where parents are involved have more support from families and better reputations in the community.
- School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.

Parent involvement standards

The overall importance of parent and family involvement, as the foundation for all other education reforms, warrants the same consideration as other areas for which national standards are being developed. The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement were developed by the National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals. They were created to be used alongside other national standards and reform initiatives in support of children's learning. In particu-

- STANDARD I: **Communicating**—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- STANDARD II: **Parenting**—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- STANDARD III: **Student Learning**—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- STANDARD IV: **Volunteering**—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- STANDARD V: **School Decision-Making and Advocacy**—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- STANDARD VI: **Collaborating with Community**—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

lar, they are keys to achieving the eighth national education goal outlined by Goals 2000: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children."

- Ask that students show respect to their peers and the tutors in the FOCUS room.
- Provide extra help in those subject areas in which the student is weak.

Students are referred to the program by teachers, school counselors, parents, and sometimes the students themselves. Referred candidates must have a good school attendance record and must express a motivation to succeed. Upon receiving permission from the student's home, the FOCUS coordinator meets with the appropriate staff to determine the student's participation.

Student evaluation

Student progress is based on achievement of the goals the student sets with the FOCUS coordinator before each grading period. "What we emphasize in the

FOCUS program is that students do their best, whether or not that results in higher grade point averages," says Harschnek—although grade point averages often improve as a result. The FOCUS coordinator meets weekly, and sometimes daily, with teachers to discuss student progress and to learn what's happening in the regular classrooms. A formal review of student progress with the coordinator and staff is conducted twice each quarter.

"The program demands a lot of time and patience from the volunteer tutors," says Harschnek; "but as tutors, we benefit from seeing our students grow in confidence as they learn to manage the schoolwork and improve their skills."

For more information on the FOCUS program, contact Sharon Harschnek at 147 Red Fox Road, SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403.

I. Communicating

Communication is the foundation of any solid partnership. When parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress. Too often communication between schools and parents goes only one-way, without any opportunities to exchange ideas and share perceptions. Even parent-teacher conferences can be one-way if the goal is merely reporting student progress. True partnership requires give-and-take conversations, goal-setting, and regular follow-up.

II. Parenting

Parents are a child's life support system. Consequently, the most important support a child can receive comes from the home. School personnel can support parenting by affirming and supporting parents' efforts to fulfill their role. From making sure that students arrive at school rested, fed, and ready to learn, to setting high learning expectations and nurturing self-esteem, parents sustain their children's learning. When school staff recognize parent roles and responsibilities, ask parents what supports they need, and work to find ways to meet those needs, their appreciation of parenting is made clear.

A SCHOOL REFORM GLOSSARY

by Anne Wescott Dodd

School reform means many different things in different schools around the country. Following are a selection of terms used in describing initiatives that all fit loosely under the umbrellas of innovative education or school reform.

AUTHENTIC OR ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

Students' learning is measured by looking at how well they perform on real-life or simulated tasks, rather than by counting the number of test questions they answer correctly. Students may present information orally, write essays, or work with other students to solve complex problems.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Students work together in small groups. Because their goal is to make sure everyone in the group understands what they are expected to learn (e.g. a math concept, the meaning of a poem), they teach each other or put their heads together to solve a problem.

INCLUSION

All students, including those with disabilities (whether physical or learning-related), are taught together in regular classroom settings. Specialists, teacher aides, materials, and/or equipment are provided in the classroom for students who need assistance.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Entire study units or courses are designed that include information from a variety of subjects. For example, students might learn math, history, science, and written and oral language as they work to come up with a possible solution for a community problem.

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Another way of describing a curriculum which combines different subject areas. A humanities course might include information drawn from art and music along with literature, writing, history, and geography.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Incorporates information about the cultural, historical, and present-day experiences of people from many different backgrounds. Teachers try to help students understand how peoples' background affects their thinking, behavior, and place in society.

PEER TUTORING

A student who understands a concept being taught uses his/her knowledge and skill to help another student learn it. Researchers

have found that teaching someone else is one of the best ways to remember what one has learned.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

A student's progress is measured by considering a collection of his/her work over a period of time, such as a semester. These portfolios are often reviewed by a group of teachers and evaluated or scored according to pre-set criteria.

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

More decisions (about budgets, hiring, curriculum) are made at the school rather than the district level. Principals, teachers, and parents have more power and flexibility to determine a school's course.

STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM

Students' needs are used to plan the curriculum and classroom activities. Teachers spend less time talking in front of the whole class. Students are more active, often working on individual or small-group tasks.

UNGRADED/MULTIGRADED CLASSROOMS

Students of different ages and grades are grouped together. Small groups may be formed within the classroom depending on students' interests or skill levels. Children of different ages learn together. Sometimes older students teach younger students.

WHOLE LANGUAGE

This approach to elementary teaching involves students learning to use language as a "whole" rather than as skills broken down into parts. Students learn by using language naturally as they study all subjects. Instead of worksheets and drills, they write and talk about the books they read, keep learning logs in math, and write field reports in science.

Anne Wescott Dodd is the author of *A Parent's Guide to Innovative Education* (Noble Press, 1992).

SCHOOL REFORM ISSUE-IN-BRIEF

III. Student Learning

Student learning increases when parents help at home. Enlisting parent involvement provides educators with a valuable support system, a team working for each child's success. The vast majority of parents are willing to assist their students in learning, but many times are not sure what is most helpful and appropriate. Helping parents connect to their children's learning enables parents to show their children that they value what they achieve. Whether it's working together on a computer, displaying student work at home, or responding to a particular class assignment, parents' actions communicate to their children that education is important.

IV. Volunteering

When parents volunteer, families and schools reap benefits that come in few other ways. Literally millions of dollars of volunteer services are performed by parents and family members each year in the public schools. In order for parents to feel appreciated and welcome, volunteer work must be meaningful and valuable to them. Capitalizing on the expertise and skills of parents and family members provides much-needed support to educators in their efforts to meet academic goals and student needs. Although there are many parents for whom volunteering during school hours is not possible, creative

PERFORMANCE-BASED EDUCATION

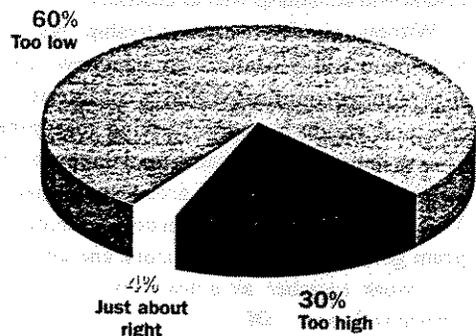
In a performance-based approach to education, it's what you do with what you know that counts, not merely what you know. The performance-based approach requires students to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in order to solve problems or perform tasks they are likely to encounter in their lives beyond the classroom. Performance-based education parallels what employers are now demanding of workers. Workers, whatever their role, are expected not only to perform specific tasks but also to understand the overall concerns and aims of the system, company, or industry that employs them. Today, students leaving school enter a complex society where expectations of basic skills include far more than reading, writing, arithmetic, and the recitation of isolated facts. In performance-based education, students are expected to apply their knowledge and skills of proper language usage to write essays and support arguments with evidence; to use basic mathematics facts to solve complex, multi-step problems; to read and produce commentary and accomplish tasks described in texts; and to design and conduct science experiments. Performance-based education seeks to make what is learned in school useful in daily life. The emphasis on performance may mean that less material gets covered in a given class, but understanding of the material taught will be far greater than the time when students were asked only to memorize and recite the lessons for the day.

Adapted from the Pennsylvania Coalition for Public Education Information Series.

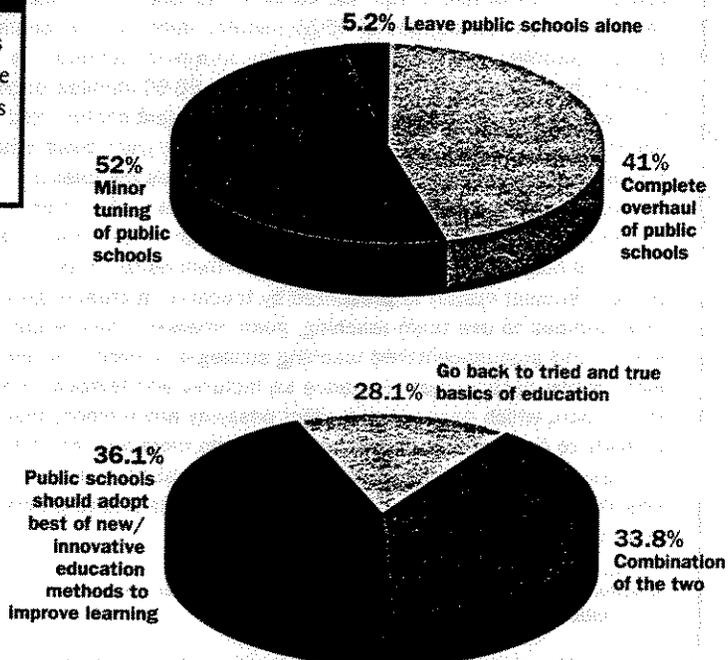
PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL REFORM

The following graphs show the results of surveys and focus groups done on behalf of the Education Commission of the States, in order to provide insights into how school districts can best communicate about reform. The graphs illustrate how participants reacted to the statements provided.

In your opinion, do the public schools set their standards of acceptable performance too high, too low, or just about right?



Which point of view comes closest to your own?





Whether people are critical or supportive of our present education system, everyone would like to see our schools be as good as possible.

solutions like before- or after-school drop-in programs or at-home support activities provide opportunities for parents to offer help.

V. School Decision-Making and Advocacy

Effective partnerships develop when each partner participates fully in the decision-making process. Schools and programs that actively enlist parent participation and input communicate that parents are valued as full partners in the educating of their children. Parents and educators depend on shared authority in decision-making systems to foster parental trust, public confidence, and mutual support of each other's efforts. The involvement of parents, as individuals or as representatives of others, is crucial in collaborative decision-making on issues from curriculum and course selection to discipline policies and overall reform measures.

VI. Collaborating with Community

Communities offer a wide array of resources that are valuable to schools and the families they serve. When schools and communities work together, both are strengthened, leading to gains that outpace what either could accomplish on its own. The best partnerships are mutually beneficial and structured to connect individuals, not just institutions or groups. This connection enables the power of community partnerships to be unleashed.

Partnership challenges and opportunities

Parent and family involvement is a wise investment for communities truly concerned about student achievement. If old, ineffective traditions of parent involvement are to be transformed, there must be adequate support from the education authorities outside the school. Effective parent involvement policies and practices at the district, state, and national levels are crucial. Supporting parent and family involvement doesn't have to be expensive, but financial resources as well as moral support improve the chances of success. When policy makers and education leaders make parent involvement a priority, their actions and the support systems they provide reflect their commitment.

Engaging parents in effective ways requires confronting the challenges that have prevented parent involvement. Administrative leaders play a pivotal role in making parent and family involvement in school reform a reality. Educators and other staff can sense administrators' commitment to involving parents. The tone of any school reform effort is often set by a school's administration. If principals and other leaders collaborate with parents, teachers will be more likely to follow suit. Increasingly, the best models for good management in this country come from organizations that encourage people to speak out about their concerns and solve problems cooperatively, rather than by management decisions enforced through a strict hierarchy. Such an approach can lead to better decisions—and better results—in schools as well as businesses.

Without administrative leadership, real school improvement will be difficult to achieve. Genuine change requires coordinated efforts, consistent leadership, and steady support. Working together to achieve their common goals of school improvement, principals and teachers can accomplish a great deal. When parent involvement becomes a mutual program goal, and parents, educators, and administrators work together as a team, then true school reform will result. **OC**

SCHOOL REFORM ISSUE-IN-BRIEF

BLOCK SCHEDULING

Block scheduling refers to the way the time for student instruction is organized in schools. It often means longer class periods, fewer subjects per day, and fewer students in each class. This type of schedule looks different from the conventional one, which features seven to nine class periods of 45-55 minutes each, with students typically enrolled in five subjects per day. In a block schedule, a student may take three subjects per day, for 60-90 minutes each, for a nine-week period. Students learn more subject content and understand concepts more quickly when they are given more time for each subject, when more hands-on experiences are used in instruction, when subject areas are integrated, and when more individual attention is given to students through smaller class size. Block scheduling also provides more opportunities for variety in the way subject matter is presented by teachers. It creates greater opportunities to use team teaching, guest speakers, field experiences, and student-centered teaching strategies designed to promote active participation. Reliance on lectures and textbook-driven instruction, which depend on student passivity and memorization, is likely to decrease when teachers are given more time per class. Increased planning time and fewer class preparations per day enable teachers to prepare more effective lessons and to provide more immediate feedback to students.

Adapted from the Pennsylvania Coalition for Public Education Information Series.

Parent Involvement Position Statement

A Parent's Responsibilities

- ▶ **to safeguard and nurture the physical, mental, social, and spiritual education of the child**
- ▶ **to provide opportunities for interaction with other children and adults**
- ▶ **to lay the foundation for responsible citizenship including instilling a knowledge of and respect for our nation's diverse cultural heritage**
- ▶ **to provide a home environment that encourages and sets an example for the child's commitment to learning**
- ▶ **to know, help, and interact with the child's teachers and school administrators**
- ▶ **to communicate with and participate in the selection/election of school officials**
- ▶ **to develop, through observation, a knowledge of how the child functions in the school environment**

Parent Involvement Position Statement

A Parent's Rights

- ▶ to have clear, correct, and complete information about the school and the child's progress
- ▶ to have confidentiality of information about the child;
- ▶ to have clear understanding of the processes to gain access to the appropriate school officials, to participate in decisions that are made, and to appeal matters pertaining to his or her child;
- ▶ to expect a sensitivity to language and cultural differences (inclusiveness)
- ▶ to observe the child at school

Barriers to Parent/Family Involvement

Most Common Barriers Cited by Parents

- ▶ **Lack of Time**
- ▶ **Feeling They Have Nothing to Contribute**
- ▶ **Not Understanding the System**
- ▶ **Lack of Child Care**
- ▶ **Language and Cultural Differences**
- ▶ **Feeling Intimidated**
- ▶ **Lack of Transportation**
- ▶ **Scheduling Conflicts/Difficulties**
- ▶ **Not Feeling Welcome**

Research Findings

When it comes to parent involvement and its powerful influence, the knowledge base is broad and clear. The challenge comes in transforming knowledge into practice, and practice into results.

The most comprehensive survey of the research is a series of publications developed by Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla: *The Evidence Grows* (1981); *The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987); and *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* (1995). Citing more than 85 studies, these publications document the profound and comprehensive benefits for students, families, and schools, when parents and family members become participants in their children's education and their lives.

The findings listed below are from the pertinent research.

Parent and Family Involvement and Student Success

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Students whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
- Different types of parent/family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parent involvement activities must be well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents.
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, it can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains.

- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- Student behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parent involvement increases.
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, develop a working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.
- The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years; there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels.
- Junior and senior high school students whose parents remain involved, make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and (3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

*The evidence is now
beyond dispute.
When parents are
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Henderson and Berla

Parent and Family Involvement and School Quality

- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- Schools where parents are involved have more support from families and better reputations in the community.
- School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education.
- The school's practices to inform and involve parents are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's education than are parent education, family size, marital status, and even student grade level.

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A report from the

SCHOOL, FAMILY & COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

From: CHANGE IN SOCIETAL INSTITUTIONS
Edited by Maureen T. Hallinan, David M. Klein
and Jennifer Glass
(Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1990)

CHAPTER FIVE

Single Parents and the Schools

Effects of Marital Status on Parent and Teacher Interactions

JOYCE L. EPSTEIN

INTRODUCTION

The one-parent home is one of the major family arrangements of school-children today. Over 15 million children live in one-parent homes, most in mother-only homes and most as a result of separation or divorce. From a total of about 62 million children overall, the number in one-parent homes is an important and growing subgroup of children in the country. Each year over 1 million children under the age of 18 have parents who divorce. In the United States in 1986, 25% of the households with children under 18—about 1 in 4—were single-parent homes (U.S. House of Representatives, 1986). Membership in one-parent homes is even greater for black children, with about half of all black children under 18 years old in one-parent homes (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982). It is estimated that over 50% of all children born after 1980 will live with one parent for at least 3 school years before reaching the age of 18. Most will live in poor, female-headed households (Furstenburg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Garbarino, 1982; Glick, 1979; Masnick & Bane, 1980).

In earlier times, single-parent homes were atypical; now they are common. The historic contrast raises many questions about the effects of single-parent homes on the members of the family. Much has been written about single parents, their children, their numbers, and their problems, but little research has focused on how single parents and their children fit

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into other social institutions that were designed to serve "traditional" families. When children are in school, the family and school are inexorably linked. Because of this linkage, changes that occur in families must be accommodated by responsive changes in schools.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Schools and families are overlapping spheres of influence on student learning and development (Epstein, 1987). The model of overlapping spheres of influence recognizes that there are some practices that schools and families conduct separately but that there are other practices that can best be conducted as partners. This view is in contrast to a long-standing alternative perspective that emphasizes the separateness of these institutions.

An emphasis on separateness. One perspective on institutions and their relationships emphasizes the importance of their *separate* contributions to society. This view assumes, for example, that school bureaucracies and family organizations are most efficient and effective when their leaders maintain independent goals, standards, and activities (Parsons, 1959; Waller, 1932; Weber, 1947). Institutions that are separate and nonoverlapping give little consideration to the ideas or histories of the other groups or to their common or interlocking aims or goals until there are problems or trouble. This is, in effect, a "conflict resolution" model, requiring interventions and interactions only when necessary to solve serious problems.

An emphasis on overlapping spheres of influence. A social-organizational perspective is offered as the basis for research on schools and families (Epstein, 1987) and other interinstitutional connections that influence the education of children (Epstein, 1989). In this model, the key, proximate environments that educate and socialize children are shown as spheres of influence that can, by design, overlap more or less in their goals, practices, messages, and resources for students. Major "forces" are considered in the model, including (1) time—to account for changes in the ages and grade levels of students and the influence of the historic period, and (2) the philosophies, policies, and practices of each institution. These forces affect the nature and extent of "overlap" of families and schools. The model integrates and extends the ecological approach developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979); the educational insights of Leichter (1974); the sociological studies of schools and communities of Litwak and Meyer (1974); the theory of institutions and individuals of Coleman (1974); and a long tradition of sociological research on school and family environments (Coleman *et al.*, 1966; Epstein & McPartland, 1979; McDill & Rigsby, 1973; and others).

The model of overlapping spheres of influence recognizes the interlocking histories of institutions that educate and socialize children and the

changing and accumulating skills of the individuals in them as the basis for studying connections that can benefit children's learning and development. This, in effect, is a "conflict prevention" model in which institutions invest resources in shared goals (such as student success) in order to prevent or reduce tensions and problems that could require later, more costly treatment.

These two theoretical perspectives are reflected in the practices of two types of teachers and may influence their interactions with single and married parents. Some teachers believe that families and schools have different responsibilities that can best be accomplished separately and independently. These teachers may make greater distinctions in their opinions about the effectiveness of single and married parents if they view single parents as lacking the resources needed to carry out family responsibilities. Other teachers believe families and schools overlap in their interests and share responsibilities for the education and socialization of their children. They may make fewer distinctions between single and married parents if they view all parents as important contributors to their children's education.

Opinions differ about whether schools and teachers should be informed about parents' marital status or changes in family structure. Some argue that teachers are biased against children from one-parent homes. They suggest that teachers negatively label children of divorced or separated parents, explain children's school problems in terms of the family living arrangement rather than in terms of their own teaching practices or the children's individual needs, or assume parental inadequacies before the facts about parents' skills are known (Hetherington, Camara, & Featherman, 1981; Laosa, 1983; Lightfoot, 1978; Ogbu, 1974; Santrock & Tracy, 1978; Zill, 1983). This view sets schools and families apart as separate spheres of influence, with families expected to cope on their own with changes and problems.

Others argue that schools should be informed about parental separation or divorce because teachers provide stability and support to children during the initial period of family disruption, can be more sensitive to children's situations when discussing families, and can organize special services such as afterschool care for children that may be needed by single parents and working mothers (Bernard, 1984). This view brings schools and families together, as overlapping spheres of influence with both institutions working together to help children cope and succeed even during times of family changes and stress.

The discrepant opinions of how much families should inform schools about family circumstances are each supported by parents' accounts of experiences with teacher bias or with teacher understanding and assistance (Carew & Lightfoot, 1979; Clay, 1981; Keniston, 1977; National Public Radio, 1980; Snow, 1982). There are few facts from research, however, about

whether and how teachers respond to students in differently structured families or about how single parents perceive, react to, and become involved with their children's schools and teachers.

Many early studies of single parents and some recent ones are based on a "deficit theory" of family functioning. One major underlying assumption of this work is that the number of parents at home is the key variable for understanding effective parenting and children's success. That is, two parents are always better than one. For example, research based on the "confluence" model argues that crucial intellectual resources are lacking when the father is absent from the home (Zajonc, 1976). This theory asserts that the father is the family member with the highest intelligence and is the educational leader of the family. This is a mechanical theory that has not been well supported in research. It establishes an unequivocal bias against one-parent homes, putting mothers in a fixed and forced subordinate position, discounting the roles most mothers play in encouraging their children's education, and ignoring the roles of schools in guiding family activities that concern school skills.

Other research on single parents based on their deficiencies assumes that one-parent homes are unstable, uncaring, lacking in emotional and academic support or strong role models for students' school success. The number of parents at home is the measure used as a proxy for numerous alleged weaknesses of the one-parent home. Studies that include the number of parents as the only explanatory variable establish a theoretical bias against one-parent homes, without allowing for alternative explanations.

An alternative view focuses more on the strengths and potentials of families, with attention to the activities and practices of families of any size or structure. The underlying assumption of these studies is that the quality of family practices and processes explain more about parental effectiveness than marital status or the number of parents at home (Barton, 1981; Blanchard & Biller, 1979; Dokecki & Maroney, 1983; Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Marotz-Bader, Adams, Beuche, Munro, & Munro, 1979; Shinn, 1978).

The change from a "deficit model" to a "strengths model" has led to more thoughtful studies of children and parents in one *and* two parent homes. Models improved in small steps, from the simple, mechanistic theories of the impact of the number of parents in the home on student achievement or behavior, to only slightly more complex theories that added family socioeconomic status (SES) as another explanatory variable. Researchers recognized that because low education and low income often accompany single-parent status, it is necessary to measure these family conditions as well as marital status so that negative effects due to SES or education were not attributed falsely to single-parent status (Barton, 1981; Kelly, North, & Zingle, 1965; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Svanum, Bringle, & McLaughlin, 1982). For example, children from well-

educated, middle-class, one-parent homes often perform as well as similar children from two-parent homes.

The improvements in knowledge gained from added measures of social class were not enough, however, to clarify the inconsistent results across studies of the effects of marital status on parent behavior and student achievement. Two relatively stable status variables—marital status and socioeconomic status—do not adequately represent the dynamics of family life that contribute to student achievement or success in school (Hanson & Ginsburg, 1986). Even recent studies of family contacts with the schools (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Garfinkle & McLanahan, 1986; Kurdek & Blisk, 1983; Milne *et al.*, 1986; Zill, 1983) have ignored the roles of teachers in increasing or reducing differences in parent and student behavior in differently structured families. A comprehensive review by Newberger, Melnicoe, and Newberger (1986) calls for studies of the many factors that may ameliorate and explain the negative conditions of one-parent homes.

The present study looks at some potentially important variables that allow schools to change to meet the changing needs and conditions of families. We use data from teachers and parents to examine family and school connections in one- and two-parent homes. We focus on the children's living arrangements that affect the day-to-day communications and interactions between schools and families. We compare single and married *parents' reports* of the frequency of teacher requests for parent involvement. We look next at *teachers' reports* of the quality of involvement of the single and married parents of their students, and the *teachers' reports* of the quality of the homework completed by children from one- and two-parent homes. And we examine other similarities and differences among single and married parents concerning their children's education.

We ask the following questions: Do single and married parents differ in their perceptions of teacher practices of parent involvement? Are teachers' perceptions of parents and children influenced by family living arrangements? How does marital status relate to other family and school connections? And, how do teachers' practices reflect the two theoretical perspectives that emphasize separateness or overlap of families and schools? To address these questions, we introduce, first, a simple model that improves upon earlier research on single parents by accounting for marital status, parent education, and teacher leadership to study parent-teacher exchanges and evaluations. We then test a more complete model that places marital status, parent education, and teachers' practices of parent involvement in a fuller social context with other characteristics of the school and family.

This exploration includes many measures of *family structure* and processes, *student characteristics*, and *school and classroom structures* and processes. The independent variables, introduced as they are needed in

different analyses, include *family size*, race, and parent education; *student* grade level, classroom ability, and behavior in class; *teacher* leadership in parent involvement, teaching experience, and overall teaching quality; and specific *teacher-parent* interactions about the child as a student.

Unlike earlier research that often used "special problem" samples to study single-parent families (Shinn, 1978), this is a purposely stratified sample of a normal population of teachers in grades 1, 3, and 5 in public schools in the state of Maryland and the parents and students in their classes (Becker & Epstein, 1982a). Importantly, the data from teachers, parents, and students are linked so that particular teachers' practices can be connected with the parents and students in those teachers' classrooms (Epstein, 1986, 1990a). Few previous studies measured the behavior and attitudes of single parents about the schools their children attend (Clay, 1981), and none link the teachers' and parents' practices and evaluations of each other.

SAMPLE, VARIABLES, AND APPROACHES

Surveys of teachers, principals, parents, and students in 16 Maryland school districts were conducted in 1980 and 1981. About 3,700 first-, third-, and fifth-grade teachers and their principals in 600 schools were surveyed (Becker & Epstein, 1982a; Epstein & Becker, 1982). From the original sample, 82 teachers were selected who varied in their use of parent involvement in learning activities at home. They were matched by school district, grade level, years of teaching experience, and characteristics of their student populations. Among the teachers, 17 were confirmed by their principals as strong *leaders* in the use of parent involvement activities. In all, the 82 teachers ranged along a useful continuum from high to low use of parent involvement, with the "confirmed leaders" making the most concerted use of parent involvement in learning activities at home.

Data were obtained on the achievements and behaviors of the students in the 82 classrooms. The parents of the children in the 82 teachers' classrooms were surveyed about their attitudes toward and experiences with parent involvement. In all, 1,269 parents responded to a questionnaire by mail—a response rate of 59%. Of these, 24% were single parents—close to the national average of 22% (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1982).

We requested that the parent complete the survey who is most familiar with the child's school and teacher. Over 90% of the respondents were female, and virtually all of the single-parent respondents were female. Thus the research provided a sizable, useful sample of single and married mothers whose children were in the classrooms of teachers who differed in their use of practices to involve parents in their children's education.

The categories *one-parent home* and *single parent* come from the parents'

reports that only one parent lives at home with the child. We prefer the terms *single-parent home*, *one-parent home*, or *mother-only/father-only home* to describe the living arrangements of schoolchildren, rather than the pejorative terms *broken home*, *broken family*, or even *single-parent family*. A single-parent home or a two-parent home may or may not be "broken" by marital, economic, or emotional conditions (Engan-Barker, 1986; Kamerman & Hayes, 1982). To determine if a family is "broken" requires clear and sensitive measures in addition to the structure of living arrangements. A child in a single-parent home may have contact with two parents, although only one parent lives at home when the child leaves for and returns from school. The data do not include information on the cause, choice, or duration of single-parent status, nor can we identify calm or troubled relations in two-parent homes. Our sample does not permit us to study one-parent homes where the father is the custodial parent or the parent most knowledgeable about the child's schooling. These are important characteristics of families that should be included in new studies of family and school effects (Bane, 1976; Eiduson, 1982; Furstenburg & Seltzer, 1983; Shinn, 1978; Zill, 1983).

Parent involvement refers to 12 techniques that teachers used to organize parental assistance at home, including reading, discussions, informal learning games, formal contracts, drill and practice of basic skills, and other monitoring or tutoring activities. For example, the most popular teachers' practices included: ask parents to read to their child or listen to the child read; use books or workbooks borrowed from the school to help children learn or to practice needed skills; discuss school work at home; and use materials found at home to teach needed skills. Eight other activities were also used by teachers to establish parents at home as partners with the teacher to help students do better in school. The activities, patterns of teacher use, effects on parents, and effects on student achievements are discussed fully in other publications (Becker & Epstein, 1982a, b; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Epstein, 1986; Epstein, 1990a). Parent involvement in learning activities at home is a complex, difficult type of teacher-parent partnership (Leler, 1983), but these practices include more parents and have greater positive impact than other forms of parent involvement that occur at the school building (Epstein, 1986). Involvement in learning activities at home is the type of involvement that most parents would like the schools to increase and improve across the grades (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Epstein, 1990b).

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the single and married parents in the sample. There are several important differences. Significantly more single parents are black, reside in the city, have fewer years of formal

schooling, work full-time, or have one child. The single and married parents are about equally represented by children in the three elementary-school grades (1, 3, and 5) in the study and in the classroom of teachers who were confirmed by their principals as *leaders* in the use of parent involvement. These characteristics of the Maryland sample are similar to those expected from a national sample of single parents.

We use mothers' education rather than both parents' education, or either parent's occupation, in order to minimize missing or incomparable data for one- and two-parent homes. Mothers' education has traditionally been used as an indicator of family SES (Sewell & Hauser, 1975). As others

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Single and Married Parents

	Single parents (N = 273) Percentage respondents	Married parents (N = 862) Percentage respondents
Race^a		
White	35.9	73.2
Black	64.1	26.8
Residence^a		
City	57.1	27.7
County/suburb	42.9	72.3
Parent education^a		
Some high school (or less)	27.1	15.2
High-school diploma	32.2	38.4
Some college	28.1	22.6
Bachelor's degree	4.8	10.5
Some graduate school (or more)	7.8	13.3
Employment^a		
No work outside home	33.1	40.4
Part-time work	11.3	21.4
Full-time work	55.6	38.2
Family size^a		
0 siblings	24.9	11.7
1-2 siblings	58.3	71.9
3-4 siblings	15.0	14.2
Over 4 siblings	1.8	2.2
Extended family (other adults)	23.8	10.2
Grade level of child		
Grade 1	41.8	38.3
Grade 3	27.8	26.9
Grade 5	30.4	34.8
Teacher leadership in parent involvement		
Confirmed leader	27.5	20.4
Not confirmed leader	72.5	79.6

^aChi-square tests yield significant differences in proportions for single and married parents beyond the .001 level.

have noted, mother's education may be more pertinent than other measures for studying family influences on children's school behaviors, or as an indicator of a parent's familiarity with school organizations and procedures (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Milne *et al.*, 1986). In one-parent homes especially, mother's education may be a more important and accurate indicator of schoollike activities at home than other occupational or economic indicators.

RESULTS: PARENTS' REPORTS OF TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents were asked to report how often their child's teacher requested their involvement on the 12 home-learning activities described earlier. Parents' reports of teachers' requests ranged from 0 to 12 frequently used activities, with a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 3.4. Table 2 shows how single and married parents' reports differed by the educational level of the parents and by the teachers' leadership in parent involvement. The mean scores and tests of comparisons in the first column of the table show that, compared to married parents, single parents reported significantly more requests from teachers to assist with learning activities at home (4.80 vs. 3.76). The figures in the second column indicate that among single parents, high- and low-educated single parents reported about equally frequent requests from teachers for parent involvement. Among married parents, however, less-educated married parents reported more frequent requests from teachers for parent involvement than did more-educated married parents (4.16 vs. 3.30).

In the third column, the measure of teacher leadership adds important information about the experiences of parents. Single and married parents with children in the classrooms of teachers who were confirmed by their principals as *leaders* in parent involvement reported more requests than parents who children's teachers were *not leaders* in parent involvement. The differences were especially great between married parents in teacher-leader and nonleader classrooms.

Other comparisons noted in Column 4 of Table 2 reveal differences in single and married parents' reports about teachers who were *not leaders* in parent involvement. Highly educated single parents in these teachers' classrooms reported significantly more requests than highly educated married parents (4.47 vs. 3.04). Less-educated single parents reported significantly more requests than less-educated married parents (4.73 vs. 3.97).

If we looked only at the differences in involvement by marital status and educational levels in Columns 1 and 2 of Table 2, we would miss the

TABLE 2. Parents' Reports of Frequency of Teachers' Use of Parent Involvement (12 Techniques) (Means, Standard Deviations, and Test Statistics from Multiple Comparisons of Single vs. Married, Low vs. High-Educated Parents and Parents of Children in Classrooms of Confirmed Leader vs. Nonleader Teacher in Parent Involvement)

Parents' reports of teachers' use of 12 parent involvement techniques	Family structure		Parent education		Teacher leadership in parent involvement		Other significant comparisons of means
	Single parent	Married parent	Low	High	Confirmed leader	Nonleader	
Single parent	\bar{X} 4.80*	\bar{X} 4.87	\bar{X} 4.87	\bar{X} 4.70	Confirmed leader	Nonleader	Single vs. married, low education in nonleader classroom (\bar{X} = 4.73* vs. 3.97)
	s.d. 3.53	s.d. 3.42	s.d. (144)	s.d. (102)	N (41)	N (103)	
Married parent	\bar{X} 3.76	\bar{X} 4.16*	\bar{X} 4.16*	\bar{X} 3.70	Confirmed leader	Nonleader	Single vs. married, high education in nonleader classroom (\bar{X} = 4.47* vs. 3.04)
	s.d. 3.23	s.d. 3.30	s.d. (433)	s.d. (102)	N (29)	N (73)	
Low	\bar{X} 3.30	\bar{X} 3.30	\bar{X} 3.30	\bar{X} 3.08	Confirmed leader	Nonleader	Low vs. high education, married parents, in nonleader classroom (\bar{X} = 3.97* vs. 3.04)
	s.d. (801)	s.d. (801)	s.d. (368)	s.d. (60)	N (103)	N (103)	
High	\bar{X} 3.03	\bar{X} 3.03	\bar{X} 3.03	\bar{X} 3.04	Confirmed leader	Nonleader	
	s.d. (308)	s.d. (308)	s.d. (308)	s.d. (60)	N (60)	N (60)	

*Parent education is high if the respondent attended or graduated from postsecondary school; low if parent attended or graduated from high school only.
*T-test significant at or beyond the .05 level.