

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 640

EA 024 203

AUTHOR Carter, Dorothy A.
 TITLE Community and Parent Involvement: A Road to School Improvement.
 PUB DATE Apr 92
 NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Awards; *Citizen Participation; Community Development; Community Involvement; *Elementary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Public Schools; *School Community Relationship

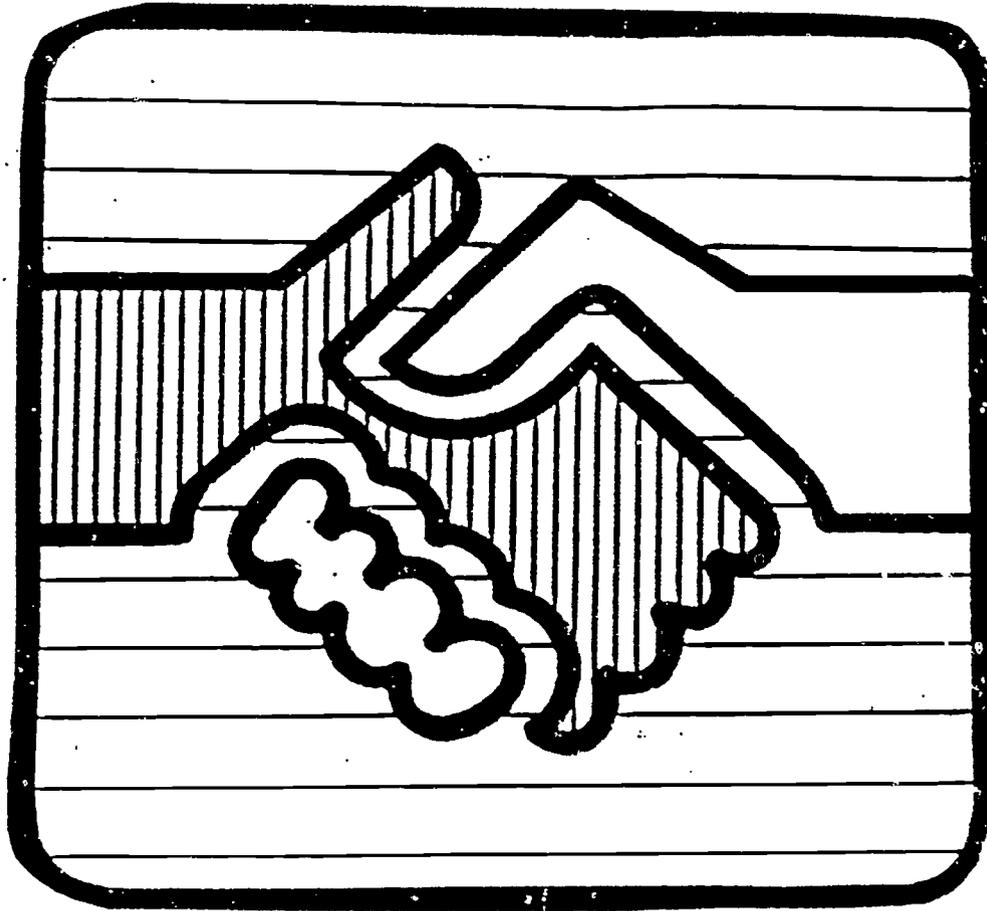
ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of community and parental involvement in education. Sample programs and activities have been selected from the schools recognized as excellent by the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement School Recognition Program. Numerous brief case studies highlight interesting and creative ways in which schools, parents, and community volunteers increased the quality of education in many schools across the nation. The introduction cites program summaries in parent and community participation. The next section addresses preparing parents and community for school improvement. This is followed by information on creating and managing school volunteer programs. Research from successful schools during the years 1986-90 is presented in the form of brief examples of parental and community involvement. The next section which outlines the partnership approach, is followed by a section on involvement in community services. A summary concludes the document. (Contains 19 references.) (RR)

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Session Title:
Nationally Recognized Elementary Schools: Analyses of
Educational Practices

ED349640



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A Road to School Improvement

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Tuesday, April 21, 1992
8:15 A. M.

Presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA)
San Francisco, CA 1992

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COMMUNITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Dorothy A. Carter

Parent involvement is on everyone's list of practices to make schools more effective, to help families create more positive learning environments, to reduce the risk of student failure, and to increase student success. State education agencies have offered mainly symbolic, verbal support for the importance of parental involvement, but little financial support for staff and programs needed to improve parent understanding, teacher practices and family and school connections (Epstein, 1987).

Activities presented in this chapter were selected from the sample of schools recognized as excellent by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education Research and Improvement School Recognition Program, a system-wide service agency and division of the United States Department of Education.

These programs give examples of interesting and creative ways in which schools, parents and community volunteers increased the quality of education in many schools over the nation. Sharing these practices and innovative partnerships can be a valued contribution to schools and communities nationwide.

Programs are categorized according to the seven elements outlined by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory as essential to promising programs mentioned by Williams and Chavkin (1989). In addition, examples of student involvement are included in community services and school activities.

In recent years the nation's governors, educators, and other leaders have focused on making schools better. States, districts, and communities have worked diligently to improve student achievement and to prepare students for the world of work. Research indicates that more children can achieve success if families take a more active role in their education (Newton, 1990).

Parents have said that they want to help their children learn. They want to know how they can become more involved. First, they need to know what is going on in the schools and how their children are doing. Second, they want to know how the system works and how they can be a part of it. Third, they want to know what they can do at home and at school to help.

Teachers, according to The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (1987) and other surveys, want parents to:

- a) Share responsibilities - read to and tutor their children to be interested in learning; contact teachers about changes in the child's environment or situation that may affect his/her performance; discipline their children more; don't expect the school to have sole responsibility; reinforce at home what is taught at school.

b) Participate in school - Attend school meetings and support school programs; serve as volunteers when possible; be willing to be consulted about changes in nonacademic school policies such as discipline or extra curricular activities.

Teachers are less willing, however, to have parents involved in decisions about academic areas, such as what subjects are taught, grading, class size, and homework.

Researcher Joyce L. Epstein (1989), cites five types of parent and school involvement that occur in different places, which require different materials and processes, and lead to different outcomes.

Type 1. The basic obligations of parents refer to the responsibilities of families to ensure children's health and safety; to the parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school; to the continual need to supervise, discipline, and guide children at each age level; and to the need to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior appropriate for each grade level.

Type 2. The basic obligations of school refer to the communications from school to home about school programs and children's progress. Schools vary the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences. These kinds of communication greatly affect whether the information about school programs and children's progress can be understood by all parents.

Type 3. Parent Involvement at school refers to parent volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school. It also refers to parents who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their own education or training.

Type 4. Parent Involvement in learning activities at home refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help. Ideas included are instructions from teachers to parents for monitoring or assisting their children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with class work.

Type 5. Parent Involvement in governance and advocacy refers to parents' taking decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

Research by the Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL) identified and described the characteristics of "Promising Parent Involvement Programs" in a five state region, which included Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Alabama, and Texas. The staff of SEDL worked with experts in education, visited selected programs, and reviewed evaluations to determine the validity of the elements. Some programs were closely connected with resources such as National Education Association and the National School Volunteer Program.

The seven elements common to the SEDL Promising Programs were:

1. WRITTEN POLICIES - Helped both staff and parents to understand their role. In the Houston Fail-Safe Program, for example, strong administrative policies served as a foundation for developing and sustaining parent involvement in the schools.
2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT - Administrative support was essential for providing funds, materials, meeting space, equipment, and designated personnel.
3. TRAINING - Both parents and educators needed workshops. The Albuquerque Public Schools' Parent Center trained school staff and undergraduate education majors.

4. **PARTNERSHIP APPROACH** - SEDL put great emphasis on this element. The activities of joining, planning, goal setting, definition of roles, program evaluation, and setting of school standards helped to develop a sense of ownership and pride in the school.
5. **TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION** - Parents were made to feel welcome and comfortable coming to school. School staff did not feel threatened by parents' suggestions. Schools developed various ways to keep parents and the community informed (for example, telephone calls, newsletters, and visits to homes).
6. **NETWORKING** - The programs found ways to share information, resources and technical expertise. Multicultural, ethnic and intergenerational groups used networking and identified additional resources.
7. **EVALUATION** - Regular evaluation activities at different stages of the program led to revision. Administrators were able to monitor and make suggestions, which meant they were supportive and involved. "As a result, parents could be seen, valued, respected, and held as responsible as school staff for the educational success of all children.

In short, the foundation upon which effective parent involvement programs must be built is the primary concept of an equal mutually supportive partnership supported by these seven elements" (Williams and Chavkin p. 20, 1989).

PREPARING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

According to Kenneth Silvestri (1989), an important objective in encouraging community involvement is to produce a well trained network of citizens who can assume an active role in improving their schools.

By contrast, parents often send the message overtly that they do not have to be involved in education because the job has been delegated to the schools. Their thinking is one in which the fire, police protection, public health, welfare, and child care are delegated. Primary responsibilities left are for the citizens to pay taxes and hold officials accountable for the delivery of services. This is known as the Delegation Model (Seeley, 1990).

Over the years this relationship and mind-set of school staff and parents have resulted in resistance to parent involvement. School staff do not see parents as professionals and sometimes see them as interfering with jobs which have been delegated to the staff.

Schoolwatch, a state wide New Jersey advocacy group committed to improving education, organized the Public Policy and Public Schools Program in 1982 to help parents define their role in school improvement efforts. The intent was to educate parents and change their thinking about delegating the responsibilities of education to the school staff alone.

A pilot program in Patterson, New Jersey, with 30 weekly sessions, now 26 weeks (6 credit hours), involved PTA members, district advisory council, school and community members. The sessions were designed to help parents understand the curriculum, administration, and organization of public schooling. Each class used presenters, audio visual aids, games, and group exercises. They discussed research (30 books and articles) including John Goodlad's *A Place Called School*, Theodore Sizer's *Horace's Compromise*, and Ernest Boyer's *High School*. The curriculum, designed by Norm and Kenneth Fructer, covered such items as the function of board members, gifted and talented programs, and parent involvement with special education. Since the program began, over 500 participants have graduated. The annual graduation ceremonies are held at Rutgers University. The program has now been replicated in 12 other cities.

objectives. It also identifies ways to enlist support, keep the group informed and define benefits. Possibly the most important tool of the planning team is the needs assessment. It will provide data affecting programs, decisions, goals, program design, and will help assess the needs of givers and receivers of service.

The planning team can identify other people to assist in the planning and implementation of the program. Parents, senior citizens, businesses, community organizations, colleges, high school students, military and government personnel are available in most communities.

The process and implementation component includes strategies for recruitment, orientation, training, assignment, and retention of school volunteers. Successful elements of engaging volunteers for services include an enthusiastic recruiter, written guidelines, personal contact, job descriptions and allowance for mobility. An orientation program is important to familiarize participants with the volunteer program. Planned meetings for teachers and volunteers will help make everyone feel comfortable. Using a variety of sources (i.e. other volunteers, outside resource professionals, and staff members), discussion at these meetings should include board policies, system priorities, role descriptions, and areas of responsibility of the staff, volunteers, teachers, and volunteer coordinator.

Matching the right person to the right assignment is critical. Volunteers have a right to a suitable assignment. One should consider personal preference, temperament, life experiences, education, and employment background. Training of volunteers for specialized proficiency should address legitimate concerns and should be collaborative.

The art of keeping volunteers in the program and encouraging their annual re-enlistment is vital to the success of the volunteer program. Retaining volunteers can be easier if they are made to feel welcome, given status, shown concrete evidence of how their services contribute to the school needs, and thanked. It is important that each volunteer be recognized in an appropriate and rewarding manner.

Evaluation of the volunteer program is essential. Collecting and interpreting data to determine accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses of the program may be used to measure how closely objectives were met. Adjustments to the program may be made through close study of this information. It may also be used to justify funding and possibly determine the continuation of a particular program.

Many different national organizations are committed to greater community participation in schools. These organizations can provide information about types of community involvement possible, getting programs started, strengthening existing programs and expanding community involvement in the schools. In most cases this information is provided free of charge. Addresses of some of these organizations are provided in Table 1.

RESEARCH FROM SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS 1986-1990

Schools mentioned in this section were selected by the School Recognition Program, division of Education Research and Improvement Office, as having excellent educational activities. Programs listed here are examples of how successful schools develop community-school relationships.

It was found that all of the 250 schools had an open-door policy for parents and community. Handbooks for teachers and parents, parent-teacher organizations, and site committees were numerous. Many schools utilized the local newspaper, television and radio stations to communicate school activities to the community. Clarity of school missions and parent understanding were their goals.

TABLE 1

PARENT INVOLVEMENT RESOURCES

Appalachia Educational Laboratory
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325
(304) 347-0400

Center for Early Adolescence
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Suite 233, Carr Mill Mall
Carrboro, NC 27510
(919) 966-1148

Center on Parent Involvement
Johns Hopkins University
c/o Joyce Epstein
3505 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

Cornell University Family Matters Project
7 Research Park, Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 255-2080/2531

Council of the Great City Schools
1413 K Street NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 635-5431

Home and School Institute
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-3633

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 353-3309

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in
Education
119 N. Payne Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-6232

National Committee for Citizens in Education
10840 Little Patuxent Pkway., #310
Columbia, MD 21044-3199
(301) 977-9300
(800) NETWORK (633-9675)

National Congress of Parents and Teachers
1201 16th Street, NW, #619
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-7878

National School Board Association
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-6722

National School Volunteer Program
701 N. Fairfax Street, #320
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-4880

Parent Involvement Center
Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Center
RMC Research Corporation
400 Lafayette Road
Hampton, NH 03842
(603) 926-8888

Parent Involvement in Education Program
San Diego County Office of Education
c/o Janet Chrispeels
6401 Linda Vista Road, Room 407
San Diego, CA 92111-7399

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 E. Seventh Street
Austin, TX 78701

University of California Dept. of Education
Joint Task Force on Parent Involvement
c/o Susan Brand
University of California at Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 95064
(415) 526 3864

Work and Family Research Council
The Conference Board, Inc.
845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(212) 759-0900

At Clara Barton Open School (Case No. 136), parents were invited before school dismissed for the summer to observe teachers to see how they managed their classrooms and how they taught their classes. Parents were encouraged to express a preference for their children's teacher for the following year.

Parents at an Illinois school (Case No. 267) were introduced to school expectations at the spring orientation. They received the program of studies and met the teachers. During the summer, letters were sent from team teachers, giving basic information about the school year. Most teachers sent letters home in the fall describing their goals, curriculum, and homework requirements.

High tech was used at Murdock school (Case No. 109). A slide/tape orientation was revised each year and presented to all new parents. While the fourth grade students published a newspaper, from the students' point of view, fifth grade students made videos and taped a monthly news program.

Strategies in giving administrators support were found in schools where there were enlightened school councils such as the School Site Council, a team of parents representing the community (Case No. 266). They worked with the staff to set goals, determine expenditures and expectations for the administration. Once school opened, the students and parents developed displays to welcome students in eight different languages. This reflected the cultural composition of the population.

At Mason Ridge School (Case No. 264), the School Effectiveness Team (SET), a parent-teacher group, advised the principal on curricular, budget, and other procedural matters. They were committed to school-based management and met monthly for goal setting, implementation of ideas and assessment. Parents participated on committees at all levels. SET reviewed and evaluated school needs based on their findings, gave recommendations to the principal on class size, experimental programs and resource personnel. Staffing needs were discussed by the faculty, SET, PTA Executive Board, and parents. The principal attributed the success of the school to experience, dedicated and stable teachers; adoption of Lee Canter's assertive discipline plan; the establishment of SET, and adoption of school-based management. These allow him to address the needs of the school and increase parental involvement.

Training is the element viewed by researchers as the most important component in school reform. Recently, superintendents are encouraging administrators to take workshops. Principals are encouraging teachers, teachers are encouraging parents to take sessions on parenting and school involvement. Not only parents but grandparents are frequently involved in schools of the 90's. At Hebrew Academy of Indianapolis (Case No. 275), parent awareness evenings with guest speakers and panel discussions, special training for early childhood and primary parents are offered. Although more than 80 percent of the mothers work, there is a high percentage of both parents and grandparents involved in the school.

In Cherokee Elementary School (Case No. 265), a handbook for volunteers is given to parents along with the training by classroom teachers. Topics covered include commitment, school rules, policies, discipline, confidentiality, and procedures. In addition, the volunteers designed Positive Action, a program to teach positive self-concepts, social interaction and decision making. Cherokee parent leaders adopted two elementary schools and trained their volunteers, prepared training materials, and gave staff development to their faculty.

Many colleges have included classes on community relations with opportunities for students to participate in schools in their teacher training courses (Case Nos. 48, 219). Video tapes have also been

used for training. For example, the National School Volunteer Program of Washington, D.C. trained 250 parents who logged over 7,500 hours of service (Case Nos. 221, 269).

A parent section in the library, or in the room assigned to volunteers, with self-help videos, tapes, and parenting material gave parents access to resources and information to meet their needs at Fort Washington Elementary School in California (Case No. 6).

Computerized files on volunteers may be found at Altara Elementary School, in Sandy, Utah (Case No. 65). A master printout highlights areas of interest, time commitment, specialized talents, and room assignments. A room representative and three parents are assigned to coordinate volunteer services for each classroom and to provide orientation.

A similar program at Whittier Elementary School (Case No. 167) was developed to enable schools to utilize volunteers effectively. Information about volunteers and community professionals was catalogued making access easy for teachers who were looking for volunteer resources.

Two-way communication in volunteer programs is vital to success. Schools with non-English speaking parents face a special challenge in maintaining communication. At Skylane School, Solana Beach, California, are numerous opportunities for parents to affect their children's education. Spanish parents participant in decision making through interpreters, translation of materials, and the bilingual community liaison (Case No. 100).

Handbooks at Oak Terrace in Illinois (Case No. 115), are in Spanish and English and interpreters are available during PTA conferences. Parents said, "Uds. nos faciliton en todos los modos para ayudos a nuestros hijos para avonzar". (You make it easy in every way for us to help our children progress.)

School expectations are sent to parents in a myriad of ways at Dartmouth Elementary School in Texas (Case No. 255). Each student receives a Parent/Student handbook, and weekly newsletters are sent home. There are PTA newsletters, volunteer coffees and a Meet the Teacher Night. The school was given the Platinum Award for RSID Parent Advisory Committee for its outstanding parent volunteer program. To qualify for this award, volunteer hours must equal or exceed ten times the enrollment of 569 students.

Specialists have sessions to give advice and encouragement to the parents of elementary children in the early grades at Holy Angels School (Case No. 267). They are also taught to form networks among themselves. The Parent Teacher Organization sponsors four meetings to help parents increase their effectiveness and to decrease their anxiety.

Parents are advocates for Horace Mann School in the District of Columbia. The have formed a coalition with the community and the school, which engineered the revitalization of the Mann School and other neighborhood schools included in the Six School Complex. Through a joint effort they were able to design and obtain licensing and funding to complete the Horace Mann Community Center located on the school grounds. During the day the students use the center and during the rest of the time it is used by the community.

Many schools used volunteers to help provide services to parents for children's protection and safety. For example, volunteers organized a phone network to notify parents of school closing (Case No. 12). As part of the Missing Child Program children are video taped, finger printed and taught emergency skills (Case No. 14). Some schools organized Safe Homes where parents pledged not to serve alcohol,

or allow drugs, or leave children unsupervised (Case Nos. 17, 114). In other schools Latch Key Children from single parent homes were given a safe place to stay while studying. At Tucker School in Massachusetts, the Extended Day was organized by the Parent Teacher Organization and the Parent Action Council for 20 to 30 children. Different courses are offered each afternoon with an instructional team for both programs. The fee for the Early School Program (ESAP) is \$1.00 per day and Children Learning After School (CLASP) is free (Case No. 28).

Basic to the success of the instructional programs at Dartmouth Elementary School (Case No. 255), are the parent volunteers. Because of their dedication this school was awarded the Platinum Award from the RSID Parent Advisory Committee. Parents assist in the clinic, library, classrooms, computer lab, and resource room. They organize hospitality, parties, bazaars, health, and preschool screening. They participate in Helping Hands, Odyssey of the Mind, science fairs, cultural arts, school based management, field trips, school supplies, and the publishing of the Pow Wow, a student publication lab which encourages student writing. The students with the help of the teacher write a draft. Afterward, a volunteer types the book, laminates the book, makes a cover for the book, and binds the book which is placed on display in the library until the end of school.

Greater parental involvement has helped parents appreciate the role of teachers. At West Orange Elementary (Case No. 107), the Home and School Association parents agreed to devote 20 service hours to the schools each report period. Parents and chairpersons keep records of hours served. They are tallied each report period. The committee enforces the program by assessing families \$10.00 for every hour not served. In the beginning, resistance was met; however, parents soon realized the positive things that were accomplished because of their involvement, and attitudes changed. The school now has been able to increase the number of projects that parents are involved with.

As an indicator of success, Franklin Pierce School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Case No. 112), has achieved national recognition. The school was a nominee for the Ace Awards and cited as a model in the National Publication School-Age Handbook for their before and after care program. The kindergarten children produced a television skit which aired on ABC Circus, a syndicated children's show. Their motto: We don't do things here that harm other people. Thirty percent of their participants were in special education, with varying degrees of handicaps and language problems.

The New Jersey Department of Education recognized the Irwin School (Case No. 234) among the 14 exemplary programs in the state that involved parent participation in the learning process. A presentation of their program was given at the Principals and Supervisors Association meeting in Atlantic City.

Dodads and Marvelous Moms (Case No. 172) are a volunteer group of 30 who work on Saturdays and evenings performing all kind of maintenance tasks. Another group of 100 volunteers helps with the PTA Carnival, a fund raising activity. This generated over \$22,000 for John S. Armstrong Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, last year (Case Nos. 61, 172).

THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

A partnership is a mutually supportive arrangement between a business and a school. Written contracts in which the partners commit themselves to specific goals and activities intended to benefit students are often used. Partnerships may involve business employees as tutors, mentors, coaches, or guest speakers in partner schools. A business may or may not make material or monetary contributions, but people resources are often the most important contribution. Schools provide intangible returns such as good will, meeting places or academic resources.

Imagine being adopted by a ship! In Alaska the Yakutat Elementary School has been adopted by the USS Ticonderoga CG-47 and the Clinton VH11 (SW). Students correspond with the men on the ships when they are out of port. Navy men share their sea experience with students. Field trips on the ships are extensions of the school learning environment and students have hands on science projects conducted aboard ship (Case No. 88).

The local Chamber of Commerce in Oklahoma coordinated the Adopt-A-School program. The program entailed business employees visiting the school to tutor (Case No. 272).

In Holy Angels School, Aurora, Illinois, college engineering student teachers volunteer their services. They observe the students in classes and design learning activities for students. A local business gives \$1,000 annually to seed exciting projects (Case No. 267).

At Alvin Hill Elementary School special emphasis is on the computer lab with partnerships with Texas Instruments and Apple Computers. Computers are available in each classroom for students to facilitate learning through enrichment software (62 Texas Instruments modules and 178 Apple disks) (Case No. 90.).

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Students gave services to the community in every school. They were practicing to be good citizens, to share with those less fortunate, locally, nationally and internationally. Many participated in intergenerational activities from first grade through junior high school.

Line-of-Love was organized by a fifth grade student whose district was not included in Hands Across America. The entire school and members of the community held hands, which extended two miles. A food donation was the cost to participate. As a result of the project \$2,800 was contributed to the local food bank. The student was recognized locally and given a National award (Case No. 113).

The fourth and fifth grade students at Stewart School in New Jersey (Case No. 270) made up the student council; they planned, organized and implemented community service activities for the school. For example, they planned a food drive for the Salvation Army, made crafts for Ronald McDonald House, baked and sold snacks at school to raise money for needy families identified in the newspaper. The second grade class sold seeds to raise money to buy rose bushes to plant a memorial garden for the Challenger astronauts.

At Mayde Elementary School (Case No. 258) in Houston, Texas, students developed The Mini Mall, an enrichment activity for all students. The Mall has a post office, pet store, Student Council Store, grocery store and a redemption center. The purpose of the Mall is to provide realistic experiences in math, reading, economics and health. Fifth grade students with parent volunteers, are clerks for the stores and post office. A schedule allows classes to visit the Mini Mall regularly. The activities encourage students to transfer skills from the classroom to real-life situations.

Teachers, too, volunteer their time and energies in their communities. Teachers at Deer Creek Elementary School (Case No. 246) were credited with outstanding community involvement. They have membership in Junior Hospitality, Junior League, Red Cross, Adult Literacy Program, Ronald McDonald House, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women and are very active on Community and Church Boards.

SUMMARY

Joyce Epstein, a noted researcher, shares these expected outcomes of community involvement in the schools. If more effort is spent on developing parent involvement, parents will have a better understanding of teacher's jobs and school programs. They will feel less anxiety when interacting with the school staff and administration.

Student outcomes will reflect an increase in their learning skills. Self-esteem will be improved by receiving individual attention from volunteers and parents. Students will also learn how to communicate with adults with ease.

Teachers will realize that parents are willing to help, and they will be more aware that parents are interested in the school. Teachers will try to involve more parents in their programs.

Recommendations for successful programs include training for administrators, teachers, parents, and the community; volunteer coordinators for each program; involvement of males in programs so that male students will have positive role models; development of global connections as well as local and national ones; and involvement of all available resources in the community.

Through parental involvement and partnerships, schools and communities are making tremendous strides as they support one another financially and personally. As they share political, economical and educational resources, children will benefit. These programs make a difference in our school systems.

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