

PARENTS' PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON
THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AT RED CEDAR VOCATIONAL AND
SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTER IN RICE LAKE, WISCONSIN

by

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ABSTRACT

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The primary purpose of this study was to describe the parents' perceived effectiveness of parental involvement on their children's education. The school that participated in the study was Red Cedar Vocational and Special Education Center in the Rice Lake Area School District in the spring of 2001. Parental involvement was defined as the parent or parents' participation in an on-going parent program, school events and activities, and involvement in setting goals and objectives. An experimenter-designed survey of fourteen questions was administered to 16 parents. This study showed that there was a high correspondence between the degree of parental involvement and perceived student success. There was also, however, a low number of parents who actually became involved in all aspects of their children's education; the most frequent barriers being scheduling conflicts and lack of child care for other child(ren) in the home. It is

recommended that parents and schools communicate with each other about learning objectives and children's progress through newsletters, school handbooks, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and telephone calls in order to maximize opportunities for communications in light of scheduling conflicts which preclude parental involvement to some extent (McDonald & Frey, 1999).

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WISCONSIN

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many studies have clearly demonstrated that family involvement encourages student achievement or other positive behaviors and attitudes that increase success in school (Boyer, 1999; Olmscheid, 1999). By exchanging information, sharing in decision-making, helping at school, and collaborating in children's learning, parents can become partners in the educational process. When parents/families are involved in their children's education, children not only perform better in school, but schools improve as well (Pape, 1999). Policy makers at all levels are increasingly aware of the crucial role that families and the community play in the education of our children. This is apparent in the Title I, Special Education, Head Start, and other federal programs that mandate consultation and collaboration with families. Many state and district policies also stipulate programs and practices to involve all families, not only those with children who receive special services ("Developing Family/School Partnerships," 1997).

One advocate for the cause of parental involvement is the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPPIE). Members of this organization are dedicated to developing effective family/school partnerships in schools throughout America. Their mission is simple: "to encourage the involvement of parents and families in their children's education and to foster relationships between home, school, and community

that can enhance the education of all our nation's young people" (NCPIE, 1997, p.1).

Parents/families and schools should communicate with each other about school programs, discipline codes, learning objectives, and children's progress. This sharing of information can be accomplished through newsletters, school handbooks, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, informal messages, and telephone calls. Schools can work through community-based organizations to develop relationships with parents who previously have not been actively involved in school-parent activities (McDonald & Frey, 1999).

Schools can reach out to link families to needed services and community organizations which, in turn, can strengthen home environments and increase student learning. McDonald and Frey have found that parents who are frequently involved in their children's experiences, behaviors, and attitudes towards school can influence their children's views of personal educational attainment.

Educators have long suspected that parents' past experiences in school settings would have an effect on the academic socialization of their children. If the parents' experiences were negative, this may be one barrier which society would face. On the other hand, if the parents' school experiences were positive, it may enhance their willingness to participate in their children's education (Developing Family/School Partnerships, 1997). The perceived effectiveness of parental involvement in children's education at the Red Cedar Vocational and Special Education Center (Red Cedar Hall), a school of students ages 3-21 years who are severely cognitively disabled, in the school district of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, will be examined.

Adversity in schools has become a more and more common experience for our

children. There must not only be reasons, but also solutions to this problem. It is the belief of many educational researchers that there is a lack of established parent/family programs in our schools across America. If we can make family-school partnerships an ongoing, practical reality in all schools, then we will have greatly aided in the academic success of the children in our schools ("Get involved," 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to evaluate parental involvement at the Red Cedar Vocational and Special Education Center (Red Cedar Hall) in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, during the spring of 2001.

Research Objectives

This research will address six objectives:

1. Identification of the level of participation by the parents in their child's educational experience;
2. Identification of the parents' perceived effectiveness of their school involvement in their children's educational success;
3. Identification of the parents' attitudes toward the value of the "Coffee Talk" program at Red Cedar Hall;
4. Identification of barriers to parental involvement;
5. Identification of parents' perceived strengths of the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall; and
6. Identification of parents' suggestions for improvement of parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need to be defined.

Advocate - One who argues for a cause.

Mandate - An authoritative command or instruction.

Parent - "Any adult who takes primary responsibility in raising the child"

(Karther, & Lowden, 1997, p. 42).

Assumptions

There is one assumption apparent in this research, that parents are answering the questions honestly.

Limitations

The researcher has identified two limitations to the research. These are:

1. Parental return rate of the survey, which may be influenced by concerns about confidentiality.
2. The use of a cluster sample for this survey, which limits the generalizability of the results.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of literature about parent/family involvement in education. It also includes information on the relationship between the parental role and the child's success in school. This literature review also contains information about several links between the parent-child relationship, home learning environment, and school readiness.

Linking Parental Role to Children's Success

"Thirty years of research tells us that the starting point of putting children on the road to excellence is parental involvement in their children's education," reported the U.S. Department of Education in 1996 (Boyer, 1999, p.34). Parental involvement is a distinct association between parent and child with direction and support from the teacher to improve student performance. Children from preschool through high school require continually evolving, age-appropriate assistance from home. Historically, emphasis for parental involvement has been placed on the preschool and early school years but researchers have found the secondary years of education are significant well. Although, during these years, fewer opportunities are offered to the parents by the schools and the parents are less encouraged to be involved in their child's education. Of course, in today's society, one cannot simply define a parent in the traditional manner but must consider other care givers such as grandparents, siblings and guardians. Therefore, some researchers prefer the term "family involvement."

"The home is believed to be the single most important factor in children's educational attainment," wrote George B. Shaw (in Boyer, 1999, p.35). Parental involvement is essential. Research shows that children who do better in school grow up to be more successful in life. Although mothers are more likely to be the care givers involved in their children's education, recent research conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics showed that children do better in school when their fathers are involved in their schoolwork, whether their fathers live with them or their mothers are also involved (Boyer, 1999). Therefore, school personnel should work to provide opportunities to get fathers involved in their children's education.

While a school-wide parent involvement program is preferred, it is possible for teachers to get their students' parents involved in the classroom as well as at home. A 1998 U.S. Department of Education survey, "Family Involvement in Education: A National Portrait" (Pape, 1999, p.48), showed that parents crave information on how to support their children's learning, both at home and at school. Among its key findings are these:

- "79% of parents would pay a fee for their child to attend an after-school program. Computer technology classes are the most popular choice among parents, followed by arts, music and cultural programs, supervised recreational activities, community service, and basic-skills tutoring."
- "Research also indicates that parents who are involved in their child's academic life have a profound effect on the child's ability to learn and help instill in them an appreciation for learning that can last a lifetime."

In a review of the parent involvement research literature recently conducted by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, and published by the Center for Law and Education, in Washington, DC (Pape, 1999, p.49), it was stated that:

- "Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher;"
- "In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, disadvantaged students' achievement not only improves, but also can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children;" and
- "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 aren't involved are more apt to drop out of school."

In conclusion to their review, Henderson and Berla state, "The research has become overwhelmingly clear; parent involvement--and that means all kinds of parents--improves student achievement" (Pape, 1999, p.49).

In Pape's article (1999, p.50) in Education Digest, "Involving Parents lets Students and Teachers Win," she incorporates the advice of a nationally recognized parent involvement expert named Dorothy Rich. Rich advises teachers that they must expect parents to be involved. "Many teachers never had a sense that parental involvement goes along with the job," she says. "Not only must they expect parents to be involved, but teachers need to understand that communication with parents must be a two-way street." Parents want to hear how their child is doing, what's happening in the classroom, their goals and objectives, and how their child is interacting at the classroom scene.

Olmscheid (1999) addresses issues related to parental involvement in their children's education and what can be done to increase parent participation in education. His research has shown that schools that work well with families have increased ratings of teachers by parents. In these cases, he recommends that the school should start a parental involvement program if one does not already exist and that they need to meet the needs of the parents. Flexibility is the key. Why is the role of parents in education important? "Children benefit when their parents take an active interest in their schooling," according to the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (Olmscheid, 1999). Three factors over which parents have direct control are absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television viewing. Parental involvement is even more important in reading than in math and science. What is required for children to succeed in reading is for the parent to read aloud to them and research shows this to be true without regard to the parents' income or educational level ("Parents in schools," 1999).

Improving parental involvement is a focus of education policy at the local, state, and national levels. Many states have enacted legislation that promoted parent involvement in schools. In addition, there are provisions to strengthen ties between families and schools in several major pieces of federal legislation, including the Goals 2000 Educate America Act of 1994, Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, and the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act. The literature linking parental involvement to student achievement is extensive. Included in the many different parenting types and practices linked to positive student outcomes are: authoritative parenting practices; high expectations and aspirations; parent-teacher communications; participation

in school events or activities; parental assistance at home; and participation in and discussion about learning activities (Desimone, 1999).

There is a method for expanding parental involvement in schools which includes, first of all, improving schools' services to families by making schools more accountable to parents; second, strengthening ties between schools and families traditionally underserved by schools; and third, better serving students by taking advantage of parents' rich stores of knowledge about their children (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999).

McDonald and Frey (1999) discuss a program called Families and Schools Together (FAST) that brings at-risk children and their families together. In multifamily groups FAST works to strengthen families and increase the likelihood that children will succeed at home, at school, and in the community. It involves an initial 8-week program, followed by two years of monthly meetings.

The positive, long-term impact of early intervention programs on children's development, such as Head Start, has been well documented. In a study by Parker and Boak (1999), parent involvement is believed to assume a central role in positive learning, greater cognitive development, and higher academic achievement. Concerning school readiness, recent research has confirmed a positive relationship between parents' participation in Head Start and aspects of the parent-child relationship and home learning environment. Parents' participation in early intervention programs may also enhance early learning skills in their children. These studies have also demonstrated that parent participation in literacy interventions can increase children's overall language ability. Additionally, findings indicated that a parent's acceptance of play behavior in their

children at the Head Start program results in positive gains for children's readiness for school and, in turn, their increased independence in the classroom.

In the United States, as in most industrialized societies, education is a key factor for predicting social mobility. In fact, the potential penalty for not abiding by the social norm of investment and caring for your child (e.g., child neglect, abandonment) is typically quite severe, including a loss of social ties to friends and family, and can go as far as imprisonment (McNeal, 1999). He also states that there are four elements to the successful parent-child relationship. First is the degree to which parent and child actively engage in conversations pertaining to education. Through this means the importance of schooling and education is conveyed to the child. The second element is the parents' involvement in the parent-teacher organization (PTO). The third measure of parental involvement is monitoring. The assumption is that parents that closely monitor their child's behavior out of concern for their well being translates into improved educational performance and reduced problematic behavior. The fourth and final element of parental involvement identified in this research is direct parental involvement in the educational process (e.g. educational support practices). This involvement spurs parents into more actively engaging in their child's education, and knowing that the parent is actively involved convinces teachers to invest greater attention and energy into these children.

After reviewing much of the literature in support of linking parental roles to children's success, it is clear that the researchers discussed in this proposal had a primary purpose, to examine the ability of parents to encourage competence, control, independence, motivation, and self-worth in their children in relation to academic performance. Considering the need for this issue to be addressed, educators and

researchers face the crucial but not insurmountable task of creating successful parent/family involvement programs, which will in turn produce successful adults (Developing Family/School Partnerships, 1997).

Learning and Family Status and Structure

Although the concept of socioeconomic status and social class appear frequently in research as related to one's home background, there is lack of agreement on precisely what the terms mean or how to measure them. In one interpretation, social class is taken to represent a style or way of life. In another, it represents power over resources and people.

Among the relationships that have been used to assign a family to a socioeconomic status or social class are parental occupation, level of parental education, and parental income. But what is it about socioeconomic status that might affect children's ability and achievements? According to Hess and Shipman (1965, 1967), two researchers named in The Home Environment and School Learning (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993, p. 38), "In this position of weakness in social structure, parents are little inclined to encourage their children to consider alternatives, to develop criteria for choice, and to learn the basic elements of decision making and anticipating future consequences of present actions." If this interpretation is correct, then different positions in the social class hierarchy can affect the behavior of the children. Along with the affected behavior of the children comes the lack of parental involvement.

The effects of educational aspects of the home background on children have commonly been considered in attempting to explain scholastic ability or achievement. Several researchers have regarded the amount of parental attention and contact with the

child as important for the child's intellectual ability and emotional stability. In one survey of parents and schools conducted for the Central Advisory Council for Education (Kellaghan, et al., 1993), three categories were addressed: parent attitudes, home circumstances, and school factors. The results of the study indicated that the children's school achievement could be accounted for by parents' attitudes rather than their material circumstances. More importantly, it was concluded that children are more likely to be successful learners if their parents or caregivers display an interest in what they are learning, and serve as role models interested in their learning experience.

Topolnicki and Plachy (1990) compared two similar public school systems whose major difference was scholastic achievement. Although the two towns were similar in many ways, such as median household income, proportions of minorities, and total population, one town triumphed over the other on academic measures. The town with the higher academic achievers had citizens (parents) who gave their lives to volunteerism and raising money for new computers and other materials, while the parents of the other town had been committed to sports. The most important thing to them was that their children were on a sports team and devoted their efforts to becoming the best on the team. While sports involvement can enhance a child's relations at school, it should not be the only activity that is focused upon, as demonstrated by this town's student college entrance exam scores averaging in the bottom half of their state. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from these schools is that they were working towards very different goals. Administrators and teachers need to set new guidelines for academic excellence and the parents need to demand it. Says Charlene Burd, a middle school guidance counselor of the town in which scores are consistently lower, "Parents here are interested in their

children's education, but they're not overly demanding" (Topolnicki & Plachy, 1990, p.89).

"The belief that the experiences, behaviors, understandings, and attitudes of parents are frequently the most important influence on the experiences, understandings, and attitudes of their children, seems to be widely accepted among researchers in education and the social sciences, as well as among the general public" (Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan, 2000, p. 235). To determine how best to assist children in achieving their full academic potential, researchers have been interested in determining the characteristics of families that most affect the academic experiences and performance of children. Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan (2000, p. 236) noted that "earlier research on family factors related to school performance emphasize the effects of structural measures such as socioeconomic status as related to dropout behavior; questions of the relative effects of single versus two parent family structures on student achievement, or the influences among structural factors that lead to child educational attainment," which, in turn, leads to social status for the child as an adult.

Educational researchers are interested in exploring the characteristics of families and their relationship to their child's academic achievement to better understand the present status of parental involvement. With or without the knowledge of the status of the family structure, the perception is that parents who are involved in their child's education can provide the necessary educational resources for their children.

Learning Mechanisms Influenced by Parental Involvement

The major educational outcomes of the involvement process are the children's development of skills and knowledge, as well as a personal sense of capability for

succeeding in school. The literature on parental involvement in child and adolescent education conveys the clear assumption that parents' involvement benefits children's learning. "Our interest is not examining the proposition: Does parent involvement make a difference? It is rather in these questions: Why do parents become involved? When parents choose to become involved, how do they choose specific forms of involvement? Finally, how does parent involvement make a difference? (That is, what goes on in the process of parental involvement that makes it likely to create a positive difference in children's school outcomes?)" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 312).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler have suggested that there are three major reasons that parents become involved in their children's education. They are: (1) their personal construction of the parental role; (2) their personal sense of effectiveness for helping children succeed in school; and (3) their reaction to the opportunities and demand characteristics presented by both their children and their children's school. Personal construction of the parental role is determined through observation and modeling of their own parents, friends, and so forth. During this construction, the parent is able to imagine, anticipate, and act on various activities with their children. When these activities are considered by the parent, it creates the possibility of an active role because the parent believes that he or she can perform those activities. Personal effectiveness comes from direct and vicarious experience, verbal persuasion by others, and emotional arousal such as concern about a child's well being. The parent believes that he or she has the skills and knowledge necessary to aid in their child's success. Parents' involvement may also be positively influenced by the feeling that they are welcome in the school when teachers greet them, when they receive newsletters, or when they are in an inviting environment,

such as school hallways in which pictures their children have painted are posted on the walls.

Parents will often be influenced to choose involvement through self-perceptions of specific skills and knowledge. In other words, if they can see themselves being successful at something in particular, then they will choose that activity over another. Often parents have too many demands on them such as time and energy, employment, elder care and the like, which create constraints on the range of activities with which they can choose to be involved. Another important aspect of "demands and opportunities" on the parent includes a child who asks the parent for help on homework, to chaperone a trip, and so forth. The continuous invitations from the child for parental assistance will eventually engender parental involvement.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), there are three mechanisms of parental influence on children's educational outcomes. They are modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction. The parent may demonstrate modeling by asking the child about his or her day, talking with the teacher after school, reviewing homework, and making a phone call to the teacher. Modeling theory predicts that children will emulate selected behaviors of adults held in such regard. Its presence enhances children's performance in school. Reinforcement is defined by using rewarding language with the child in the forms of praise, attention, and a general interest in their education. Finally, these authors say that "parents who engage in direct, open-minded instruction primarily (involving questions and requests to plan, anticipate, and explain) will tend to promote higher levels of cognitive complexity and ability as well as factual knowledge in their children" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 323).

As children grow older, their enthusiasm for parental interest and parental involvement evolves because they are growing more peer-oriented, more independent, and less interested in accepting obvious help, praise, or even expressions of interest from parents. Parents who are involved in their children's education in the primary grades will be more likely to develop in their children a strong, positive sense of efficacy for successful achievement in school related tasks as they grow older than will parents who are not involved.

Reform: Policies to Encourage Parental Involvement

It is widely felt in this country that many parents are not responsibly preparing their children for school and are not reinforcing education once those children get to school. Nine out of ten members of the public say that more parent involvement would benefit the schools (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 1990) (Finn & Rebarber, 1992). Parents who read to their children regularly from the time they are young, give their children intellectual nourishment for school. Parents can further aid in their development of communication and worthy habits of the mind. Many states have created "parents as teachers" programs in efforts to teach basic skills to parents to enable them in teaching positive behaviors and values to their children. Head Start was among the earliest attempts to achieve such involvement. Parents served as assistant teachers and in other paid and volunteer roles. Title I of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act also mandated the creation of parent advisory councils, which were supposed to put parents closer to policymaking in individual schools.

Educators often list parent involvement as one of their top concerns. "Parents won't give us the support we need to do a good job. They won't even come to school for

parent/teacher conferences," some teachers have been quoted as saying (Pipho, 1994, p. 270). In the mid-1970's the National Committee for Citizens in Education conducted hearings in five cities and four states examining the question, "Who controls the public schools?" One of the problems uncovered during the hearings was the feeling that educators are content with one-way communication and that teachers, administrators, and board members cannot learn anything by listening to parents. In 1994, the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs released, "Training for Parent Partnership: Much More Should Be Done," a report on the extent to which training in parent involvement was a requirement for licensure for teachers and administrators in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bottom line was that too few states required teachers or administrators to study parent involvement at all or to develop skills in promoting parent involvement. Some of the findings from this study include (Pipho, 1994, p. 272):

- "Only seven states (14%) require principals or central office administrators to study parent involvement or to become proficient in promoting parent involvement;"
- "Only 15 states (29%) require most or all teachers to study or develop abilities in parent involvement;"
- "Only six states (12%) specifically require junior high/middle school teachers to study or achieve competence in encouraging parent involvement;"
- "Only six states (12%) specifically require secondary teachers to study or become competent in promoting parent involvement;" and
- "Fourteen states (27%) specifically require elementary teachers to study or become competent in this area."

Pipho (1994, p. 272) also pointed out that one of the national goals for education is that: "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." No matter which of these courses of action educators choose to take, more aggressive displays of parent power could bring on "real reform" in a hurry.

Ideology and Empowerment of Parental Involvement

Since the 1960's, the concept of parent involvement in education has become a common means by which to build the relationship between families and schools. The concept has been considered one of the most important factors for a child's success at school and is often cited as a way to solve the problems facing children in school. Literature on parent involvement in education represents several viewpoints but can be organized loosely into two main arguments: one that emphasizes the more traditional forms of involvement and one that addresses issues of ideology and inequality in schooling (Waggoner & Griffith, 1998). Traditional literature is the more dominant body of research and is broken into four parts by the authors. These include: conformity between families and schools; improving student achievement; traditional forms of parent involvement in education; and school reform programs. Previous research has brought into view the various activities that encompass parent involvement, such as ensuring that the child gets to school on time and is properly dressed, supervising homework, and asking, "What did you do in school today?" to the other extreme of being a regular volunteer.

Parents and other caregivers are more or less involved in their children's educational experience depending on employment, work responsibilities, health, changes

in the family, and the age of the child. Three general ways in which a parent might involve himself or herself in their child's education are to participate in school events, help in the classroom and school programs, or participate in parent groups. To increase parent attendance at school activities, schools might coordinate with the parent teacher associations to provide transportation and daycare services during school events. School staff and volunteers might conduct a follow-up of parents to determine reasons for nonattendance.

However the involvement occurs, the purpose is to empower the parents with the thinking that every little bit counts, whether big or small, and can increase the academic performance of their child (Griffith, 1996).

Education of Special Needs Youth

Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 94-142) and the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act (Public Law 98-524) mandate that parents should be actively involved in their children's education at school. In many situations, the parents of special needs youth are found to be socio-economically, educationally, or psychosocially handicapped or disabled. In these cases, their ability to become involved in the partnership of family and school is compromised. They may be unable to take advantage of the intent of the public laws without the support of a social worker and the continuous involvement of a parent of a special needs child may be more demanding and more challenging than those parents of regular education children.

Many states, including Wisconsin, have been active in developing outreach programs to increase parental advocacy of their children's education. These programs emphasize what could be termed an "information-brokerage" approach to family outreach.

The general concern of these programs is to help parents become more informed participants in educational decisions that affect their children (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1991).

In a study by Westling (1997), the researcher asked the parents through a questionnaire which ways they were involved in their child's education and which ways they would like to be involved. Participants were 53 parents of children in programs for children with mental disabilities of which 163 parents received the questionnaire. The most common ways the parents participated and wanted to participate were talking to their child's teacher, followed by suggesting appropriate goals and objectives, suggesting school placements, providing information about their child, and speaking with therapists who provide services. Rated lower for participation and desired participation were school activities, events, talking to school administrators, classroom activities, and advocacy activities.

A common comment of teachers is that the parents they most want to see (those with lower achieving children) seldom enter the school door. "Despite their own low school achievement, many parents value education, believing it to be a pathway to success for their children" (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 43). Parents with low educational achievement may have feelings of inadequacy. Parents tend to view their children as a reflection or extension of themselves and may avoid situations in which they expect criticisms of themselves or their children. A request for a conference with the teacher may be interpreted as a complaint about their child. One can see why a parent of a special needs child may have little parental involvement. A school-wide plan for parent involvement should increase the likelihood that more families will participate on an

ongoing basis. "There is no ready-made answer to the dilemmas of effective parent involvement; however, schools may need to reconsider conventional assumptions and practices in order to build bridges to families who do not readily respond to traditional parent-school activities" (Karther & Lowden, 1997, p. 42).

Parents and the school-to-work transition of special needs youth are also necessary because of the limited staff and time of the educators and counselors providing the services. "The ratio of students to counselors in public high schools is almost 300 to 1; and school guidance counselors are able to spend less than one hour of every five on career counseling" (Otto, 1989, p.161). Add to this the unique and complicated counseling needs of students with disabilities and it becomes clear why the parents must also be knowledgeable about the opportunities and programs available to them by law. Unfortunately, research shows that parents have little involvement in transition planning. The results of a survey of 200 families of students with disabilities, conducted by Friedenber (1993, p.10), showed that parents were significantly less involved in transition programs than they desired:

- "Nearly 70 percent desired involvement, whereas slightly more than 30 percent experienced involvement;"
- "Significantly more parents desired to have an equal part in decision making than were given the opportunity;"
- "Although 13 percent indicated no involvement experience with the transition team, less than 2 percent indicated that they desired no involvement;" and
- "Parents wanted to be involved in finding job placements and community living arrangements more often than they had the opportunity to do so."

"Lack of parent participation and involvement may be detrimental to the achievement of successful transition outcomes" (Johnson and Rusch, 1993, p. 6). There are several rationales for involving parents in the transition process. Parents know their children better than anyone else and can be valuable resources when planning their child's future. Parents can act as role models, instilling positive learning that makes job success for their children more likely. The bottom line is parental involvement can ensure more effective and positive results for their child's transition process.

Motivation is the key factor driving parents to become involved in the school-to-work transitions of their children with disabilities because many parents have an intense desire to see their children succeed in school, work, and community living (Knoblauch, 1998). Parents have a key role in the special education process and they need to make sure the individualized education program (IEP) has specific goals and objectives relating to their children's future ability to live in the community. Everything their children are doing now in school should be a cooperative effort to ensure meeting the special needs of their children.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1996) (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2000), 29% of adolescents with disabilities required social skills instruction beyond high school. Social competence can improve peer acceptance, academic achievement, and employee success, so early intervention on behalf of the parents can aid in children's future success. Parents need to begin teaching social skills to their children in settings where the skills will be used. If this is not always an option, the parents can use role playing with their child to better prepare them for future interactions with people. Teaching students to use mediators such as self-talk, self-monitoring, self-recording, and

self-reinforcement enables the child to select and use skills appropriately in actual social situations.

Parental involvement is also consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendment of 1997, which requires that parents become actively involved in assessment and instructional planning of their child's educational process. Teaching parents to teach their children to be prosocial may require them to attend a workshop specially designed to cover areas such as incidental teaching, which means taking advantage of a "teachable moment;" discussing outcomes after a child has failed to use a social skill; coaching emotions or helping the child to "label" what exactly they are feeling at that particular moment in a social situation; and assigning social skills homework which can help build the bridge between performance at home and in the community. According to researchers Elksnin and Elksnin (2000), using these strategies to teach parents of children with disabilities can promote a powerful outcome.

If education of children with special needs is to be efficient, parents need to establish a home environment with high expectations for their children's achievement (Grover, 1991). Families providing effective social support not only transfer some of the burden of instructional responsibility from the schools, but also provide an opportunity to avoid or minimize crises which may be detrimental to their child's academic success. Each child deserves to be taught the competence required for success in our society and parents who are armed with the competence to share instructional responsibility can assist schools in making the system of public education more accountable.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the participants under study and how they were selected for inclusion in this study. In addition, the instruments being used to collect information are discussed in terms of their content, validity, and reliability. Data collection and analysis procedures are also presented. The chapter is concluded with identification of the methodological limitations.

Human Subjects Protection

To ensure the protection of the rights of the participants, this researcher adhered to the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 1994). Participants were informed of the general purpose of the study, rights to confidentiality, and the researcher's availability to answer questions before, during, or after their participation. Names of the participants were not used, and the participants voluntarily took part in the study. The results of the study have been made available to the school involved. The participants had the right to withdraw at any time.

Description of Participants

The potential participants for this study were 35 sets of parents of the special education students at the Red Cedar Vocational & Special Education Center (Red Cedar Hall) in Rice Lake, Wisconsin during the spring of 2001. Red Cedar Hall is a special education center with severely cognitively disabled students, ages 3-21 years. The final sample consisted of a cluster group of sixteen parents, five of whom voluntarily

participated in the family involvement program at the Red Cedar Hall and eleven of who chose to not participate.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was created by the researcher exclusively for the purpose of measuring special education students' parental/family involvement in their education. No measure of validity and reliability was established. Ratings were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always." The survey was brief in order to increase the likelihood of the return rate. The questions were as follows:

Regarding Red Cedar Hall's parental involvement program named, "Coffee Talk:"

1. Rate your level of awareness/understanding of the parental involvement program named "Coffee Talk."
2. How many "Coffee Talk" parental involvement program meetings have you attended?
3. Rate the degree to which you believe your needs for parental involvement in your child(ren)'s education will be met by the "Coffee Talk" program.

Regarding other parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall:

4. Do you participate in school events and activities such as: holiday programs; field trips; volunteerism; and parent-teacher conferences?
5. Do you make suggestions to school personnel regarding goals and objectives for your child's individualized education program (IEP)?
6. Do you perceive your involvement in "Coffee Talk" and/or other parental involvement opportunities as being effective in contributing toward a positive and rewarding experience for your child?

Regarding general parental involvement:

7. Do you believe your parental involvement is beneficial to the teachers in aiding in your child's educational progress?
8. When you were a child, did you benefit from parental involvement in your education?
9. Do you believe that it is possible to have too much parental involvement, which may discourage your child from successful educational performance?
10. Do you feel organized parental involvement programs such as "Coffee Talk" can improve your relationship with your child?
11. Approximately what percentage of responsibility do you think parents, school personnel, and the child should each have in their academic success (the total adding up to 100%)?
12. What barriers, if any, to parental involvement do you experience; scheduling conflicts; transportation problems; language barriers with teachers; or lack of child care for other children at home?
13. What specific things do you like about the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall?
14. What specific suggestions do you have for improving the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall?

Data Collection Procedures

In mid-January, 2001, the researcher sent the survey home with each child to all the parents of special education students at Red Cedar Hall. The survey included a notice instructing them to return their responses within one week. It was explained that

respondent anonymity would be maintained, both during the study and after its completion.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The researcher tabulated frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations, and modal responses of parental involvement at Red Cedar Hall. The researcher also categorized responses regarding strengths and suggestions for improvement of parental involvement opportunities at the school.

Limitations

The methodology contains the limitation that the participants may not be representative of all the parents of children with special needs who are in a special needs facility across the country.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the parental involvement survey completed by the parents at Red Cedar Hall. The demographic information is reported first; the responses to each of the research questions are then given.

Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 16 (22.9%) who responded to the survey out of a possible 70 parents; eight individual parents and four sets of parents totaling 16 separate opinions. The ethnic background of the parents consisted of 100% of White race. One parent did not specify the number of child(ren) they have attending the school; the remaining thirteen (87%) of the sixteen surveys returned indicated one child attending the school; and two (13%) of the sixteen answered as having two children currently attending the school. Regarding the grade levels of the students, three were in the primary class (grades K-3), three were in the intermediate class (grades 4-8), two were in the secondary class (grades 9-12), and two were in the multiple handicapped class (grades K-12). Two of the parents did not specify their child's grade level. The length of time the parents have had their child(ren) at Red Cedar Hall ranged from 1 month to 16 years.

Research Objective 1

Research objective 1 was to identify the level of participation by the parents in their children's educational experience. The data is based on the responses to four questions, including: attendance at the "Coffee Talk" program; suggestions regarding goals and objectives; with holiday programs, field trips, volunteerism, and parent-teacher

conferences; and percentage of responsibility for their children's education ascribed to teachers, parents, and children. The results showed that nine (56%) of the parents reported being involved in their child's educational experience in at least one of the ways listed.

Research Objective 2

Research objective 2 was to identify the parents' perceived effectiveness of parental involvement in their child's education. The results showed that twelve (75%) of the parents believed that it would positively affect their child's education. This data was determined by averaging the percentages taken from five questions regarding effectiveness of parental involvement including: degree to which one's needs can be met, suggestions made by parents, degree to which the program will reward the child, beneficial to teachers, and parent/child relationship.

Research Objective 3

Research objective 3 was to identify the parents' attitudes towards the current parental involvement program named "Coffee Talk." The results showed that eleven (85%) parents (N=13, 3 missing) have a positive regard toward the program, three (23%) feel neutral in regards to the program and four (31%) have a less than positive attitude towards the program. This data is based on the responses to four questions regarding parents' attitude, including: awareness and understanding of the program, degree to which one's needs can be met, belief that the program can be effective for the child, and degree to which the program can improve the parent/child relationship. Three parents did not respond to these related questions. Three surveys had no response to this issue.

Research Objective 4

Research objective 4 was to identify the barriers parents face in some capacity when considering parental involvement. The results showed these barriers to include: scheduling conflicts (n=12; 75%), transportation problems (n=2; 13%), language barrier with teachers (n=0; 0%), and lack of childcare for other child(ren) in the home (n=6; 38%).

Research Objective 5

Research objective 5 was to identify the parents' perceived strengths of the involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall. The results showed 11 (85%) of the parents (N=13, 3 missing) to be positive, 3 (23%) to be neutral, and 4 (31%) to be negative about the strengths of the opportunities at the school. Three surveys had no response to this issue. This issue was addressed by four questions regarding perceived strengths, and an open-ended question about the specific things they like about the opportunities at the school. Responses ranged from brief to extensive in length.

Research Objective 6

Research objective 6 was to identify the parents' suggestions for improvement of the parental involvement opportunities at the school. On nine (56%) of the sixteen surveys completed, the parents did not make any suggestions to improve the involvement opportunities at their child's school. The other seven (44%) did contain written suggestions, including: parents' need to form a stronger union to make the director of special services and the therapists work better with the parents to get them more involved; need for a volunteer program to be established to enable parents to get involved; and need for the "Coffee Talk" program at Red Cedar Hall to be videotaped and

made available to those parents who cannot attend. The exact numbers and further discussion on this and the other open-ended question regarding "likes" about the parental involvement opportunities are included later in the chapter.

Overall, the data showed that the parents tend to have a low level of parental involvement, although the majority believes that involvement in their child(ren)'s education can be highly effective in their educational experience. The general feelings towards parental involvement and the opportunities at Red Cedar Hall are positive, but due in large part to scheduling, as reported by a large percentage of the parents, they are unable to become more involved. While critical, the number of suggestions for improving the parental involvement opportunities at the school was small.

The reader will recall that the participants responded to fourteen questions, ten of which were based on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning "never" and 5 meaning "always." A report of those results is presented next.

Awareness/Understanding of "Coffee Talk"

The options given to the parents to choose from to indicate their awareness and understanding of the "Coffee Talk" program were 1, "not at all clear," to 5, "very clear." The mean response to the level of understanding of "Coffee Talk" by the parents was 4.6, with a standard deviation of .68. The majority of the participants (n=12, or 75%) responded "very clear."

Table 1 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the parents' level of understanding of the parental involvement program, "Coffee Talk."

(Refer to Table 1 on page 63.)

Number of Meetings Attended

The mean response to the number of "Coffee Talk" meetings attended by the parent(s) was 1.6, (of a possible 2), with a standard deviation of .55. The majority of the 16 respondents (N=11, or 69%) had not attended any "Coffee Talk" meetings.

Table 2 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the number of "Coffee Talk" meetings attended by the participants.

(Refer to Table 2 on page 64.)

Degree that Needs are Met

On a 5-point scale with 1 being "not at all met," and 5 being "needs fully met," the mean response to the degree to which the parents believe their parental involvement needs are being met by "Coffee Talk" was 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.22; (N=14, 2 missing). Responses were fairly evenly spread across choices 2 through 5.

Table 3 shows the frequencies and percentages of the degree to which the parents believe their need for parental involvement is being met by the "Coffee Talk" program.

(Refer to Table 3 on page 65.)

Participation in School Events

The mean response to the individual activities was as follows: holiday programs, 3.06, with a standard deviation of 1.29; field trips, 2.38, with a standard deviation of 1.15; volunteerism, 1.88, with a standard deviation of .97; and parent-teacher conferences, 4.88, with a standard deviation of .34. The majority (56%) responded that they usually participate.

Table 4 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the parental participation in school events and activities including: holiday programs, field trips, volunteerism, and parent-teacher conferences.

(Refer to Table 4 on page 66.)

Suggestions Regarding Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The mean response for the degree to which the parents make suggestions for their child(ren)'s IEP was 4.31, with a standard deviation of .95. The majority (56%) responded that they always make suggestions.

Table 5 shows the frequencies and percentages of the rate to which parents make suggestions regarding their child's goals and objectives.

(Refer to Table 5 on page 67.)

Effectiveness of Parental Involvement Opportunities

The mean response on a 5-point scale for the degree to which the parents perceive involvement in "Coffee Talk" and other parental involvement opportunities to be effective in their child's educational experience was 4.3, with a standard deviation of .81; (N=15, 1 missing). The majority (53%) responded that it is always effective.

Table 6 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the parents' perceived effectiveness of "Coffee Talk" and other involvement opportunities as being positive and rewarding to their child's educational experience.

(Refer to Table 6 on page 68.)

Benefits of Parental Involvement to Teachers

The mean response for the degree to which parental involvement may be beneficial to teachers was 4.5, with a standard deviation of .73. The majority (63%) responded that it is always beneficial to the teacher.

Table 7 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the parents' beliefs concerning parental involvement being beneficial to the teacher.

(Refer to Table 7 on page 69.)

Personal Benefits from Parental Involvement

The mean response for perceived personal benefit to parental involvement as a child was 3.44, with a standard deviation of 1.50. The most frequent response (31%) was that they always benefited from the involvement.

Table 8 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the parents' personal benefit from parental involvement as a child.

(Refer to Table 8 on page 70.)

Parental Over-Involvement and Discouragement of Child's Performance

The mean response for the belief that too much parental involvement may be possible and discourage their child's successful educational performance was 2.13, with a standard deviation of .88. The most frequent response (44%) was that too much parental involvement discourages their child(ren) from a successful educational performance.

Table 9 shows the total frequencies and percentages of the degree of belief that too much parental involvement can be discouraging to their child.

(Refer to Table 9 on page 71.)

Organized Programs and Improvement of Parent/Child Relationship

The mean response for the belief that organized parental involvement programs such as "Coffee Talk" can improve the parent-child relationship was 4.06, with a standard deviation of .77. The most frequent response (44%) was the belief that such programs will usually improve the relationship.

Table 10 shows the total frequencies and percentages for beliefs regarding degree to which parental involvement programs can improve the parents' relationship with their child.

(Refer to Table 10 on page 72.)

Barriers to Parental Involvement

The mean response for scheduling conflicts was 3.06, with a standard deviation of 1.39. The mean response for transportation problems was 1.2, with a standard deviation of .55. The mean response for the language barrier with teachers was 1, with a standard deviation of 0. The mean response for lack of childcare for other child(ren) in the home was 1.67, with a standard deviation of .90. Scheduling conflicts and childcare needs were the two most often cited barriers to parental involvement.

Table 11 shows the frequencies and percentages of the barriers to increased parental involvement.

(Refer to Table 11 on page 73.)

Open-ended Questions

The responses to the open-ended questions of what specific things the parents like about the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall and suggestions the parents may have for improvement of the parental involvement opportunities at the

school varied in nature, but there were some similarities, also. Of 16 responses, only 1 participant (6%) did not list anything they liked about the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall. The other 15 (94%) did list various things they liked about the opportunities. The most frequent response given by the participants was the accessibility to the teachers (n=8, or 50%). The second most frequent answer given was the kindness of the teachers at the school (n=5, or 31%). The third most frequent response given by the parents was the appropriate topics offered for discussion at the "Coffee Talk" program (n=3, or 19%).

Regarding the suggestions made by the participants on 9 of the 16 (56%) surveys completed, the parents did not make any suggestions to improve the involvement opportunities at their child's school. The remaining 7 (44%), did provide some written suggestions. The most frequent response given was suggesting that the school make the meeting time for the "Coffee Talk" program later in the evening, with 4 (25%) of the participants feeling this way. The second most frequent suggestions were videotaping the "Coffee Talk" program for parents and a scheduled volunteer program, with 2 (13%) suggesting these ideas. One person made the suggestion that the parents need to form a stronger union with each other to improve the opportunities.

Concluding the survey was an open-ended question asking the parents to decide approximately what percentage of responsibility they think parents, school personnel, and the child should each have in their child's academic success (totaling 100%). The mean response of the parents to their perceived level of responsibility of the parent was 34%, of the school personnel was 44%, and of the child was 22%. These numbers were based on 15 of the 16 surveys, with no response from one participant. As the numbers show, the

majority of the parents from Red Cedar Hall believe that their child's academic success is mainly the responsibility of the school personnel, then the parent, and then the child.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter includes a discussion of the results and conclusions of the study.

The chapter concludes with some recommendations for further research.

Discussion

The present study involved an examination of parents' perceived effectiveness of parental involvement on their children's education. The results of this study showed that the overall consensus of the participants was that general parental involvement and organized programs for parental involvement are effective and necessary to aid in the academic success of their children. However, the survey also revealed that only a small majority of the parents have actually taken advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Hoover-Demsey and Sandler (1995) found that parents will often be influenced to choose involvement through self-perceptions of specific skills and knowledge, and they will choose not to be involved in something they do not feel they can personally be successful at doing. Often times the demand parents have such as time and energy, employment, childcare and the like impede their preference to be involved. As this study has revealed, the number one barrier to parental involvement was scheduling conflicts and the most frequently attended school event or activity was not a holiday program, or a field trip, or volunteerism, but parent-teacher conferences. A possible reason for participating in conferences more so than any other activity may be that parents do not see themselves as having the skills for many of the other activities, however, parent-teacher conferences are generally expected of them and so they make the effort to

become "involved" twice a year. Also, conferences are usually flexible enough to accommodate work schedules, unlike many of the other activities. It may also be seen as the most important of all activities for their children's education.

Responses to the five questions regarding the parental involvement program "Coffee Talk," revealed that the majority of the participants have a very clear awareness and understanding of the program, although most of the parents had never attended a meeting. They believe that involvement in this and other programs can always be effective in contributing toward a positive and rewarding educational experience for their children as well as improving their personal relationship between them and their children. However, as Karther and Lowden (1997) reported, a common comment of teachers is that the parents they most want to see seldom enter the school door. In programs that are designed to involve parents, student achievement not only improves, but can also reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. Olmschild (1999) states that these programs are created to meet the needs of the parents and if one does not already exist, one needs to be created so the parents can take an active role in the interest of their children.

Parents' beliefs regarding their parental involvement as being beneficial to teachers in aiding in their child's educational progress was also explored. This sample responded showed that they believe there are overwhelmingly positive benefits to the teachers when there is increased involvement by the parents, which in turn reflects positively on their child's development of skills and knowledge. Piphon (1994) reported that this is such a real issue that in 1994, the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs released a report entitled,

"Training for Parent Partnership: Much More Should Be Done." This report stated that training in parental involvement is a requirement for licensure for teachers and administrators in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bottom line was that too few states required teachers or administrators to study parent involvement at all or to develop skills in promoting parent involvement. At the time of this report, only fifteen states required most or all teachers to study or develop abilities in parent involvement. To build the relationship between families and schools, the concept of parent involvement in education has become essential.

According to the results of this study, parental suggestions to school personnel regarding their child's goals and objectives are a common occurrence. This form of involvement is very important and reflects directly on the question pertaining to which school event or activity opportunity has the highest involvement rate, parent-teacher conferences. Many parents feel that sharing their personal thoughts or beliefs during a scheduled conference will suffice in fulfilling their need to become "involved." Research has indicated that parents who are involved in their child's academic life have a profound effect on the child's ability to learn and help instill in them an appreciation for learning. For example, according to research, what is required for children to succeed in reading is for the parent to read aloud to them. At-home activities incorporating art, music, technology, math, and so on, are also important. Only about half of the participants in this study reported that they have benefited academically in some way as a child from their own parents' involvement. The same number of parents believed that it is possible to have too much parental involvement and in turn discourage their children from performing successfully. The effects of educational aspects of the home environment on

children as well as adults have commonly been considered in attempting to explain scholastic achievement. Several researchers have regarded the amount of parental attention and contact with the child as important for the child's intellectual ability and emotional stability. If a parent did not experience high levels of parental involvement as a child, they may in turn not reciprocate the involvement with their own children. On the other hand, if, as a child, they experienced too much parental involvement, they may feel they were not being allowed to develop academically on their own such as making their own educational decisions. This may have led them to become conscious of this potential error while raising their own child. Furthermore, if their parents provided an appropriate balance between their involvement and expectations for child-initiated responsibility, they may wish to model this behavior.

The responses regarding what percentage of responsibility parents believe the school personnel, the parents, and the child, have in regards to their academic success, showed that the majority believe it is the school personnel's responsibility to assure their child succeeds in their education. Rated second were the parents, and of course third were the children themselves. Some researchers in this country, report that many parents are not responsibly preparing their children for school and are not reinforcing education once those children get to school (Finn & Rebarber, 1992). Many states have created "parents as teachers" programs as efforts to teach basic skills to parents to enable them in teaching positive behaviors and values to their children. So while the consensus in this study is that the school personnel should be the most responsible party, research shows that it begins and continues in the home. Some teachers have been quoted as saying, "Parents won't give us the support we need to do a good job" (Pihpo, 1994, p.270).

However the involvement occurs, the purpose of encouraging parental involvement is to empower the parents with the thinking that every little bit counts, whether big or small, and can increase the academic performance of their child (Griffith, 1996).

The participants in this study were asked to comment on specific things they liked about the parental involvement opportunities at their child's school and any suggestions they may have to improve the opportunities. The number one response to things they liked was that the teachers were so accessible. When a teacher extends an invitation to participate in a school event, help in classroom and school programs, or participate in parent groups, it can open the doors to the unknown and make the parent feel welcome. Regarding suggestions to improve the parental involvement opportunities, only 7 of the sixteen parents chose to respond. The number one suggestion was to schedule the parent program "Coffee Talk," later in the day versus immediately after school. This suggestion corresponds with the identification of scheduling conflicts as the biggest barrier to experiencing parental involvement opportunities.

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate parental involvement at the Red Cedar Vocational and Special Education Center in Rice Lake, Wisconsin during the spring term of 2001. The participants were 16 parents of children who attended the school. Each participant completed a 14-item survey, in which the mean scores, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations were calculated and scored by the researcher.

Overall, the mean scores showed a high degree of importance placed on parental involvement and that involvement in their child's education can be highly effective in the

child's academic success. However, other than parent-teacher conferences, a low rate of actual involvement was occurring at the school.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study showed parents' perceptions to be that parental involvement is an essential ingredient in the effectiveness of a child's educational experience. It also showed that at that time, the parents were unable to be as involved as they feel they would be if they did not have outside factors, such as scheduling conflicts, creating a barrier for them. Even though this sample was small, the study is a useful means for parents to communicate their perspectives to educators. A limited population was represented in this study. Others may hold views that are similar or different from this population.

Recommendations

Several suggestions are offered for further research on the effectiveness of parental involvement in a child's education.

1. Replication of this study using a larger sample could enhance the results for greater generalizability.
2. A comparative study would provide information about whether parents of regular education students feel similarly or differently than those parents of special needs children.
3. Modification of the survey instrument to include a comparison between perceived levels and desired levels of parental involvement would also be interesting.

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Appendix A

Informed Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Shannon Dushek. I am a student in the Master's in Education Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. I am currently student teaching with Carolyn VanBuren at Red Cedar Hall. You have an opportunity to take part in a study I am conducting for my thesis about parental involvement in children's education. Questions will concern your level of involvement in your child's education as well as your perceptions of the value of parental involvement as a whole. This information will help school personnel to better plan parental involvement opportunities. Your participation is strictly voluntary and any information collected will be anonymous.

A 14-item survey has been attached to this letter for either or both parents, to answer. I am available to further discuss this survey with you if you have any questions. You can reach me at Red Cedar Hall at 234-8612, or my advisor, Dr. Helen Swanson, at (715) 232-2784. The Director of Special Services in Rice Lake, Tom Hall, has read the survey and has fully approved this project. A report of the anonymous group findings will be sent to the school secretary for all who are interested in learning the results.

If you wish to participate, please return the completed survey to school with your child in the envelope provided to hand in to their teacher by:

Tuesday, January 23, 2001

If you will not be participating in this study, please check "no" at the bottom of the survey and return it to school with your child.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!

Sincerely,

Shannon Dushek, Student Researcher

Helen Swanson, Ph.D. Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-
Stout.

Appendix B

Parental Involvement Survey

In this survey, "parent" refers to any primary caretaker of the child(ren) attending Red Cedar Hall.

Female _____

Male _____

Relationship to child(ren) at Red Cedar Hall: (check all with which you identify)

_____ Mother and Father (jointly completed)

_____ Mother

_____ Father

_____ Other (please specify) _____

Ethnic Background: _____ American Indian or

Alaskan Native

_____ Asian or Pacific

Islander

_____ Cambodian,

Laotian, or

Vietnamese

_____ African American

_____ Hispanic/Latino

_____ White

_____ Other (please specify) _____

Number of children, grade level, and how long at Red Cedar Hall:

_____ Number of Children

_____ Grade Level

_____ How long

Please circle the number that applies to you.

Regarding Red Cedar Hall's parental involvement program named, "Coffee Talk:"

1. Rate your level of awareness/understanding of the parental involvement program named, "Coffee Talk." Not at all clear 1 2 3 4 5 very clear

2. How many "Coffee Talk" parental involvement program meetings have you attended?
0 1 2

3. Rate the degree to which you believe your needs for parental involvement in your child(ren)'s education will be met by the "Coffee Talk" program.
Not at all met 1 2 3 4 5 Needs fully met

Regarding other parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall:

1-Never 2-Rarely 3-Sometimes 4-Usually 5-Always

4. Do you participate in school events and activities such as :

Holiday programs	Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Field trips	Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Volunteerism	Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
Parent-teacher conferences	Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

5. Do you make suggestions to school personnel regarding goals and objectives for your child's individualized education program (IEP)? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

6. Do you perceive involvement in "Coffee Talk" and/or other parental involvement opportunities as being effective in contributing toward a positive and rewarding educational experience for your child? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Regarding general parental involvement:

7. Do you believe your parental involvement is beneficial to the teachers in aiding in your child's educational progress? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

8. When you were a child, did you benefit from parental involvement in your education?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

9. Do you believe that it is possible to have too much parental involvement, which may discourage your child from successful educational performance?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

10. Do you feel organized parental involvement programs such as "Coffee Talk" can improve your relationship with your child? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

11. Approximately what percentage of responsibility do you think parents, school personnel, and the child should each have in their academic success (the total adding up to 100%)?

_____ parents

_____ school personnel

_____ child

100% Total

12. What barriers, if any, to parental involvement do you experience? Check all that apply, and indicate the frequency of each:

_____ scheduling conflicts Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

_____ transportation problems Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

_____ language barrier with teachers Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

_____ lack of child care for other child(ren) in the home

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

_____ other (please specify) _____

13. What specific things do you like about the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall?

14. What specific suggestions do you have for improving the parental involvement opportunities at Red Cedar Hall?

_____ Check here if you do not wish to participate. Please return the blank survey in the envelope provided to your child's teacher.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Level of Awareness/Understanding of the Parental

Involvement Program, "Coffee Talk"

	<u>Survey Responses</u>							
	Not at all clear	1	2	3	4	5	Very clear	Total
1								
Frequency								
Percent of Total								
2								
Frequency								
Percent of Total								
3								
Frequency				2				
Percent of Total				12.5%				
4								
Frequency					2			
Percent of Total					12.5%			
5								
Frequency						12		
Percent of Total						75%		
Total								
Frequency				2	2	12		16
Percent of Total				12.5	12.5	75		100%

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Parental Involvement "Coffee Talk" Meetings Attended by the Participants

	<u>Survey Responses</u>			
	<u>Attendance 0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>0</u>				
Frequency	11			
Percent of Total	69%			
<u>1</u>				
Frequency		2		
Percent of Total		13%		
<u>2</u>				
Frequency			3	
Percent of Total			18%	
<u>Total</u>				
Frequency	11	2	3	16
Percent of Total	69	13	18	100%

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Degree to which Parents Believe their need for Parental

Involvement will be met by the "Coffee Talk" Program

		<u>Survey Responses</u>							
		Not met	1	2	3	4	5	Needs fully met	Total
1	Frequency								
	Percent of Total								
2	Frequency			4					
	Percent of Total			29%					
3	Frequency				3				
	Percent of Total				21%				
4	Frequency					3			
	Percent of Total					21%			
5	Frequency						4		
	Percent of Total						29%		
Total									
	Frequency		4	3	3	4			14
	Percent of Total		29	21	21	29			100%

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Level of Parental Involvement in School Events and Activities:

Holiday Programs, Field Trips, Volunteerism, and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Holiday Programs						
Frequency	4		3	9		16
Percent of Total	25%		19%	56%		100
Field Trips						
Frequency	5	3	5	3		16
Percent of Total	31%	19%	31%	19%		100
Volunteerism						
Frequency	7	4	4	1		16
Percent of Total	44%	25%	25%	6%		100
Parent-Teacher Conferences						
Frequency				2	14	16
Percent of Total				13%	87%	100
Total						
Frequency						16
Percent of Total						100%

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Suggestions to School Personnel Regarding Goals and

Objectives for Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Rarely						
Frequency		1				1
Percent of Total		6%				6%
Sometimes						
Frequency			2			2
Percent of Total			13%			13%
Usually						
Frequency				4		4
Percent of Total				25%		25%
Always						
Frequency					9	9
Percent of Total					56%	56%
Total						
Frequency		1	2	4	9	16
Percent of Total		6	13	25	56	100%

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Beliefs that Involvement in "Coffee Talk" and other Parental

Involvement Opportunities are Effective for Child(ren)'s Educational Success

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never Frequency Percent of Total						
Rarely Frequency Percent of Total						
Sometimes Frequency Percent of Total			3 20%			3 20%
Usually Frequency Percent of Total				4 27%		4 27%
Always Frequency Percent of Total					8 53%	8 53%
Total Frequency Percent of Total			3 20	4 27	8 53	15 100%

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Beliefs in Parental Involvement as Beneficial to the Teachers
in Aiding their Child(ren)'s Educational Progress

	<u>Survey Responses</u>					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Rarely						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Sometimes						
Frequency			2			2
Percent of Total			12.5%			12.5%
Usually						
Frequency				4		4
Percent of Total				25%		25%
Always						
Frequency					10	10
Percent of Total					62.5%	62.5%
Total						
Frequency			2	4	10	16
Percent of Total			12.5	25	62.5	100%

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Beliefs in Personal Benefit in Education Due to Own Parental

Involvement as a Child

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never						
Frequency	3					3
Percent of Total	19%					19%
Rarely						
Frequency		1				1
Percent of Total		6%				6%
Sometimes						
Frequency			3			3
Percent of Total			19%			19%
Usually						
Frequency				4		4
Percent of Totals				25%		25%
Always						
Frequency					5	5
Percent of Totals					31%	31%
Total						
Frequency	3	1	3	4	5	16
Percent of Total	19	6	19	25	31	100%

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of Beliefs Regarding Parental Over-Involvement and

Discouragement of Child's Successful Educational Performance

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never						
Frequency	5					5
Percent of Total	31%					31%
Rarely						
Frequency		4				4
Percent of Total		25%				25%
Sometimes						
Frequency			7			7
Percent of Total			44%			44%
Usually						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Always						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Total						
Frequency	5	4	7			16
Percent of Total	31	25	44			100%

Table 10

Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement that Organized Parental Involvement

Programs such as "Coffee Talk" can Improve the Parent-Child Relationship

Survey Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Never						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Rarely						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Sometimes						
Frequency			4			4
Percent of Total			25%			25%
Usually						
Frequency				7		7
Percent of Total				44%		44%
Always						
Frequency					5	5
Percent of Total					31%	31%
Total						
Frequency			4	7	5	16
Percent of Total			25	44	31	100%

Table 11

Frequency Distribution of Barriers to Parental Involvement Experienced by the

Participants

	<u>Survey Responses</u>					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
Scheduling Conflicts						
Frequency	4		5	5	2	16
Percent of Total	25%		31%	31%	13%	100%
Transportation Problems						
Frequency	13	1	1			15
Percent of Total	86.6%	6.7%	6.7%			100%
Language Barrier						
Frequency	12					12
Percent of Total	100%					100%
No Child Care						
Frequency	9	2	4			15
Percent of Total	60%	13%	27%			100%

