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The journal seeks manuscripts from scholars, administrators, teachers, school board members, parents, and others interested in the school as a community.

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Lori Thomas
June 2008

Helping Teachers Work Effectively with English Language Learners and Their Families

Cheng-Ting Chen, Diane W. Kyle, and Ellen McIntyre

Abstract

Many classroom teachers across the United States feel unprepared to work with students and families who speak limited or no English. Knowing that schools are accountable for the achievement results of these students, teachers increasingly seek help. This article describes a professional development project designed to introduce K-12 teachers to effective strategies for enhancing the learning of English language learners and shares the results that occurred as the teachers placed greater emphasis on family involvement practices. The Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project introduced the teachers to research on the effects of family involvement on students' academic achievement and asked that participants develop plans for involving families more intentionally. Results of the project, documented in survey responses and in evidence shared at a culminating project event, indicated changes in many teachers' views and practices of family involvement. Teachers reached out to families in new ways and made their instruction more connected to students' background knowledge. They also acknowledged the challenges involved. Despite the challenges, however, the professional development experience led to practices that are more likely to help English language learners achieve greater academic success.

Key Words: English Language Learner (ELL), English as a Second Language (ESL), family involvement, sheltered instruction, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), professional development, teacher practices, parents

Introduction

Classroom teachers across the United States face an overwhelming challenge in working with students and families. Teachers have been consistently unprepared to work with immigrants and refugees and others who speak limited or no English (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002). Add to this the high-stakes accountability of schools which must include the achievement results of these students, and we can understand teachers' requests for help. This article describes an attempt to provide assistance to a group of elementary, middle, and high school teachers who devoted 18 months to learning strategies designed to help this growing population of students and shares the results that occurred as the teachers focused on family involvement practices.

Changing Demographics and Resulting Challenges

Changing student demographics correspondingly raise issues of teacher quality. The increasing number of immigrants from non-English speaking countries makes our schools more ethnically and linguistically diverse. According to U.S. census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), 12.54% of the population in 2006 was foreign-born. Further, 19.7% reported speaking a language other than English at home, and 8.7% described themselves as speaking English less than "very well." Moreover, the U.S. Census projected that students whose first language (L1) is not English will represent about 40% of the K-12 student population in the Unites States by the year 2030 (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The academic achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) has continued to lag significantly behind that of their peers. This may be, in part, because their teachers struggle with knowing how to teach them effectively. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' *Schools and Staffing Survey of 1999-2000* (NCES, 2002), only 12.5% of teachers with ELLs reported having eight or more hours of training in the previous three years on how to teach those students. A recent survey of more than 5,000 teachers in California conducted by Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) reported that "during the last five years, 43% of teachers with 50% or more English learners in their classrooms had received no more than one in-service that focused on the instruction of English learners" (p. 13). Half of the teachers in classrooms in which 25-50% of the students were English language learners had no (or almost no) professional development in working with ELLs.

Compounding the problem, assessment standards have increased as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) demands that these students achieve

as their peers. This expectation heightens the critical need for teachers to know how to provide appropriate instruction for this population of students now present in classrooms across the nation and how to reach out and work effectively with students' families.

Providing Help Through Professional Development

Participants in this study took part in one of two cohorts in an 18-month professional development initiative. The Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project focused on helping teachers learn and provide "sheltered instruction" (e.g., strategies designed to help students learn content at the same time they develop English proficiency) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners as well as positive family involvement practices which link to higher achievement for all students.

Participants in the project learned about and implemented the instructional strategies suggested by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004) for working with ELLs (data on the implementation of the model is presented elsewhere; see McIntyre, Kyle, & Chen, 2007). The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model is a means for making grade-level academic content accessible to English learners while at the same time promoting their language and literacy development. SIOP includes eight components: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment. Research on the model has indicated that it provides a reliable and valid way to measure sheltered instruction (Guarino et al., 2001). Further research has demonstrated that English learners benefit when their teachers have been trained to use SIOP and implement it with fidelity. In a study reported by Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006), English languague learners in such classrooms not only improved their writing skills, but also outperformed students in control classes of teachers who had not received SIOP training.

In addition to training in the implementation of the SIOP model, the project reflected research which has shown the positive connection between parent involvement and students' academic success (Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Sanders & Herting, 2000). Teachers learned how to reach out to families in respectful ways and to learn from them (Kyle et al., 2002). The project challenged the deficit view many teachers hold toward parents of poverty, language difference, or low education by showing how to see and build from families' strengths and funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004).

Further, the project combined the content of instructional practices shown to be effective with ELLs and family involvement with a powerful model of

professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1993). This model focuses on sociocultural principles for learning (Tharp & Gallimore). Novices and experts worked together to learn about effective strategies, planned appropriate lessons for ELLs, and engaged in reflective dialogue about how to best meet the needs of the target students. Further, other teachers and the leadership team assisted their performance as they made attempts to learn new strategies. As the following reflections by some of the teachers illustrate, they found the approach to professional development beneficial in their growth as teachers of ELLs, specifically, as well as in teaching all learners, in general:

- I love the hands-on strategies presented. I'll be a better teacher starting next week!
- The strategies that were shared today will be beneficial not only to my ELL students but all my students. Best practices in education benefit everyone.
- I now feel more confident, especially planning language objectives.
- Restating content objectives and building language objectives intentionally in lesson plans will help me and improve my students' ability to understand a lot faster – all of my students.

Project Emphasis on Family Involvement

As noted, the project emphasized the positive, respectful, and necessary involvement of families in supporting student learning and academic achievement. More specifically, participants received information about current research reporting the positive effects of parent involvement on students' academic achievement, and they read and discussed books and articles describing practical and proven family involvement strategies to implement in classrooms. The SIFI project also included specific readings and discussions about the value of "family visits" (home visits) as well as guidelines for planning, conducting, and learning from such experiences for those teachers who might want to explore this possibility.

The SIOP component on building background specifically addresses the importance of tapping into the background of unique experiences and knowledge that English language learners bring with them. Echevarria et al. (2004) suggest three indicators of this component for teachers to address in their planning and teaching: "concepts linked to students' background, links between past learning and new learning, and developing key vocabulary" (p. 44). Teachers who understand students' backgrounds of experiences and interests and relate what students need to learn to what they have learned previously are

better able to provide the scaffolding needed by students who are confronting new academic content (and, for many, in a new language as well).

The teachers in the project developed action plans of their intended goals in working with their ELLs, including planned strategies for involving and learning from families more intentionally and more often. Project meetings included time for the teachers to share their efforts and get feedback from their peers. As a culminating event of the project, a "Share Fair" became a time for participants to showcase particularly successful attempts and results. To an audience of visitors invited to the event, the teachers provided tri-fold posters of photos, PowerPoint presentations, examples of projects students and their families developed, and other materials from their work with families.

Methods and Data Sources

The project was conducted with two cohorts of teachers. Twenty classroom teachers and three district level administrators completed Cohort 1, and 15 teachers completed Cohort 2. The teachers taught across all grade levels, K-12. Data sources for the entire project included: observations of teachers' instruction based on the SIOP rubric, analyzed to determine percentages of implementation of the SIOP components for individuals and across the participants; results of students' achievement on a literacy assessment in project teachers' classrooms matched with students in non-project classrooms, analyzed to determine differences in academic growth; and teachers' open-ended reflections at the end of each session about their perceptions of the professional development, analyzed to determine patterns of views about the sessions and materials, thoughts about implementation of SIOP and family involvement strategies, and concerns (see McIntyre, Kyle, & Chen, 2007 for results of teachers' instructional changes and students' achievement).

This article reports on the family involvement data only. In addition to the above data sources, participants completed surveys at the beginning and end of the project about the type and frequency of their parent involvement strategies and activities. At the beginning of the project, the 20 Cohort 1 teachers responded to a survey developed by the project directors, and 18 completed the same survey at the end. For Cohort 2, the project directors used a validated survey about parent involvement developed at Johns Hopkins University (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). Eighteen participants completed the survey at the beginning of the project, and 12 participants completed the survey at the conclusion of the project.

The percentages of responses and narrative comments included on the surveys were analyzed to determine the extent and nature of the involvement

strategies teachers employed and any changes that occurred over the duration of the project. In addition, as noted above, participants presented documentation about their family involvement practices in a culminating Share Fair, and these materials were collected for further analysis.

Changes in Teachers' Views and Practices: Cohort 1

At the beginning of the project, most of the Cohort 1 teachers saw family involvement in traditional ways (e.g., parent conferences, report cards, etc.). Some teachers had made efforts to have positive interactions with families, but few went out of their way to attempt to build trusting relationships with families. For example, the majority of teachers (17 of 20) made positive phone calls to only "0-25% of my students." Further, few teachers attempted to get to know students through the families with 15 of the 20 indicating that they had "asked parents to share positive information about their child" for only "0-25% of my students." And, only 3 out of 20 reported making instructional connections from information learned about the students and their families, with most leaving this section blank on the survey.

There were positive changes in the amount and quality of family involvement during the 2005-06 school year for Cohort 1. Almost half of the 18 teachers for whom we have pre- and post-survey data made positive phone calls to over 50% of their students, and 7 reported that they had "asked parents to share positive information about their child" for "76-100% of my students." Further, 7 provided some kind of response (although brief and not detailed) to the question of how they had made instructional connections from what they had learned. They shared, "In my lessons, I make connections to the students' background, culture, or contemporary issues." "I created some lessons about families which made the students reflect and feel proud of their parents." "[I've used] more cultural activities to align with core content."

While these data indicate percentages of improvement, the teachers also provided specific examples of strategies to involve more families in the work displayed at the culminating Share Fair. Examples include: Latino College Night; weekly newsletters translated for ELL students; middle school preparation event; family journals; multicultural fair; "My Book" bilingual exchange; and "three surveys using the SIOP model to find out how parents feel about school – at the end of the first grading period, first semester, and end of year." One teacher noted, "I started a co-ed competitive soccer team, and 90% of my team are ESL students. Their extended families often come to every game."

Changes in Teachers' Views and Practices: Cohort 2

The Cohort 2 respondents to their survey revealed several insights about working with and involving families from the beginning to the end of the project. In addition, the participants also shared examples and supporting materials at their Share Fair, showcasing their strategies for involving families at school. The sections that follow summarize findings from the survey and describe the varied family involvement initiatives teachers implemented in their elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

Perspectives About Parent Involvement

Cohort 2 participants at the beginning of the SIFI project generally held positive views about the value of parent involvement and about parents' roles in supporting their child's academic development (see Table 1). Contrasting the rather positive views, however, 67% (12 of 18) of teachers agreed with the statement, "Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble." In addition, 33% (6 of 18) of the teachers agreed that "Teachers do not have time to involve parents in very useful ways," and 94% (17 of 18) agreed or strongly agreed that, "Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices."

At the beginning of the project, then, the teachers perceived the importance of parent involvement, but contact remained focused on concerns about students. Not knowing how to involve parents or having sufficient time seemed to be major constraints the teachers identified in expanding or making changes in their parent involvement strategies.

Table 1. Views About Parent Involvement, Pre-Survey

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Parent involvement is important for a good school.			2 11%	16 89%	18
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.			2 11%	16 89%	18
Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school.	1 5%		7 39%	10 56%	18
Parent involvement is important for student success in school.			3 17%	15 83%	18
All parents could learn ways to assist their children on school work at home, if shown how.			7 39%	11 61%	18
Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble.		6 33%	12 67%		18

At the conclusion of the project, the participants appeared to sustain their initial positive views (see Table 2). Particularly noteworthy, however, was the change in teachers' self-reports about contacting parents. Only 25% (3 of 12) of the teachers agreed that contacts occurred mostly for discussing concerns about a student. Instead, the majority of the teachers made contacts for a range of reasons which are described below. About 33% (4 of 12) continued to see limited time as a constraint, and the majority still felt a need for further professional development on how to involve parents more effectively.

Table 2. Views About Parent Involvement, Post-Survey

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Parent involvement is important for a good school.			1 8%	11 92%	12
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.			2 17%	10 83%	12
Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school.			5 42%	7 58%	12
Parent involvement is important for student success in school.			2 17%	10 83%	12
All parents could learn ways to assist their children on school work at home, if shown how.			2 17%	10 83%	12
Mostly when I contact parents, it's about problems or trouble.	2 17%	7 58%	3 25%		12

If teachers' contacts with parents expanded for reasons other than sharing concerns, what types of contact occurred? The following section provides data that help to explain this change.

Contacts with Students' Families

Similar to Cohort 1, the teachers in Cohort 2 also began the project with traditional approaches in their interactions with parents. Mostly this involved sending letters and memos home with the children and depending on parent-teacher conferences to make connections. Only 33% of the teachers reported making phone calls to all of their students, and only 2 of 18 teachers (11%) made any visits to their students' homes.

At the end of the project, Cohort 2 teachers continued their routine ways of contacting students' families. Two changes, however, appeared to have occurred over the duration of the project. Of the 12 respondents, 5 (42%) made calls to the homes of *all* of their students, and as noted above, for reasons other than concerns. As one teacher noted, "I make a positive phone call home as soon as possible," and another noted, "Share good news – tell the parent what the child is doing right."

The other noteworthy change from the beginning to the end of the project was the increase in the number of teachers who visited their students' homes. Only 11 % (2 out of 18) of participants had conducted family visits at the beginning of the project. At the end of the project, however, 58% (7 out of 12) of the teachers reported making these visits. Furthermore, when asked what had been their most successful practice in involving parents, four teachers identified their family visits. One teacher exclaimed, "They helped tremendously!" (see below for further discussion of family visits and how to address the language barrier).

Participation in the SIFI project appeared to result in teachers developing more positive views about family involvement and expanding their strategies for reaching out to families in order to make contacts and learn from them. In addition, some of the Cohort 2 participants found ways to focus on developing a deeper knowledge of the students and families in their teaching, as illustrated in the examples which follow.

Impact on Instruction

Many of the teachers' written comments on the survey revealed their perceptions of the positive effect family involvement can have on student behavior and academic performance: "I think partnerships with parents will help me to understand my students better academically, socially, and their behavior." "Parents who are involved – children experience more success!" "Understanding where the children come from will help me understand how they do things at home and what experiences they bring with them."

Making such connections with students' background knowledge is especially effective when introducing a new concept. As one teacher noted, this is a way "teachers could learn how to connect content to real world applications," and another viewed "knowing the students, teaching to their strengths" as a worthy outcome of involving parents and working in partnership with them. One teacher also noted that in addition to learning from the families, they could also learn from her. She elaborated, "The best thing I've been involved with was a writing/conferencing/portfolio information workshop teaching new parents about authentic writing and how to be good conference partners. They loved it, and I learned how little they really knew about what we were trying to do." Thus, family involvement in this situation opened a door to better communication and began to establish a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the parents.

The teachers presented several specific examples at the Share Fair of how their instruction provided opportunities to validate and incorporate student and family knowledge:

- One teacher invited all students to construct their "Family Tree" as a way of celebrating students' individual identities. She encouraged the students to interview their family members so that parents or other relatives could provide accurate information. In addition, she directed the students to explore their native history and culture and to create posters as a way to share what they had learned. According to the teacher, many students were amazed about how little they had known about the stories of their family members, including distant relatives or ancestors.
- Another teacher's "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words" project was similar in intent and outcome, with students' pictures instead of posters as the final products.
- A kindergarten teacher participant chose to involve the families of her students through a "Family Reading Log" project. She invited all students to read with their families and provided a story book with a family reading log in a zipper-seal plastic bag. At the end of each day, the teacher would offer the bag to one student to take home. The parents then read with their child, and together they wrote comments in the reading log. The teacher followed up with her comments in the log in order to provide essential feedback.
- Another teacher used a similar strategy with a "Daily Family Notebook" as a means of establishing communication among the teacher, parents/family, and students. However, whereas the "family reading log" focused on reading a "class" book, the "family notebook" stressed communication. Further, while the "family reading log" was intended to be passed around to each family of the class, the "family notebook" was more private, because each student had an individual notebook, thus making it more possible for parents to be more open about writing their concerns.
- A "Then and Now" project of another teacher provided an opportunity for her students and families to focus on the comparisons and contrasts of their lives in their native countries before immigration, and their lives now in the United States. The students, with their families' assistance, created books of photos, drawings, and words. One child illustrated such things as: "My house in Guatemala. It is hot…Now I play in the snow. It is cold…", and another child shared, "In China I live with my Gandmom and my Gandpop…In America I live with my brother."

While the teachers' survey responses and Share Fair products illustrate many positive views and practices, the teachers also recognized the challenges involved in establishing and sustaining effective strategies for involving and engaging families with schools. These challenges can be especially difficult for those families who are new to the United States, unfamiliar with its school contexts, and not yet skilled in English.

Issues and Challenges

Although not necessarily related to the SIFI project only, many of the participants reported positive changes about parent involvement over the past year or two at their schools: "More parents are involved in the PTA." "(More) parents want to find ways to help their children succeed – work as partners not opponents." "More volunteers for family events." "More efforts [on the school's part] to welcome parents before school starts with a picnic and 'meet & greet' orientation."

However, some teachers also expressed realistic concerns that become barriers to the involvement of more parents and their engagement as partners with schools. These concerns included the inconvenience or lack of transportation, the parents' working schedules, schools with a lack of or minimal support for family involvement, the limited time a teacher possesses, and the language barrier when translators are not available. Concerns such as these must be addressed if schools intend to involve the many families who want to be supportive but find it difficult, especially the families of English language learners. Schools making such a commitment can begin to consider possible solutions such as those that follow.

The transportation problem is not easy to deal with, since many families may live quite far away from the school. However, the school buses which transport students might also be a means for transporting parents when needed. Also, if teachers could construct a trustworthy network among students' families, car pools could be another option for parents who are willing to attend school activities but lack transportation.

Schools must also be sensitive about parents' work schedules, attempting to understand what they are and realizing that some immigrant families (and others) work two or three jobs simultaneously in order to earn enough money. Parents are no doubt very busy no matter what kinds of jobs they have. Many teachers are parents as well, so it should not be difficult for them to be empathetic with their students' parents. These insights can lead teachers and schools to schedule events at the most opportune times and to vary those times in order to accommodate all families in some way. Further, schools must not expect all parents to cooperate in the same way but instead can provide many possible ways to participate, to communicate (e.g., phone calls, letters/notes, e-mail), and to feel connected. In addition, teachers can convey appreciation for parents' efforts and a sincere welcome when parents visit (see Kyle et al., 2002, 2006 for more detailed strategies for effective family involvement).

Although many teachers affirmed the positive impact of family visits, one indicated the concern that many other teachers who have ELLs as students

might have as well, "It's more difficult to communicate with more families that don't speak English." Those concerned about the language barrier and the need for translating accurately might find it useful to use other students, older siblings, neighbors, or relatives as translators. Also, bilingual dictionary websites can provide needed assistance, for example, www.wikipedia.org (over 7 million articles in over 200 languages so far); www.encyclopedia.com; and The Internet Picture Dictionary www.pdictionary.com (French, German, Italian, Spanish, and English).

At the end of the survey, one teacher provided this insight about the time commitment required to strengthen the involvement of families and also offered a suggestion:

> On the survey, most of the items are, of course, very important. However, teachers absolutely DO NOT have time for all of it. Parents, like students, will each have individual needs and strengths, and it will require great emotional and intellectual resources on the part of the teacher to successfully negotiate parent interactions. I think that if parent involvement improves student learning, schools should provide/hire parent involvement directors to develop and coordinate programs.

The suggestion may seem too exaggerated when first considered. However, arranging high quality programs and valuable projects for family involvement is not an easy job, especially when different languages and cultures are involved. This teacher has identified a critical need for further discussion, informed understanding, committed resources, and dedicated effort to accomplish the goal of increased involvement and engagement of families with schools.

Conclusions

Participants in the Sheltered Instruction and Family Involvement (SIFI) project participated in many professional development experiences. They learned about research demonstrating the positive effects of family involvement on students' academic achievement and read resources that described practical strategies to implement. In addition, they described their intended goals for increasing family involvement in action plans. Follow-up discussions at project meetings included time to discuss their efforts and get feedback from other participants. These explicit activities of the project appear to have helped several of the teachers make changes in some of their views about family involvement and related practices. Several teachers in both Cohorts increased their efforts to contact, involve, and learn from students' families, and they made modifications in their teaching to connect and build from students' background

knowledge. With this kind of support, however challenging it may be to accomplish and whatever issues must be addressed to meet those challenges, the academic success of English language learners becomes more possible.

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Understanding the Culture of Low-Income Immigrant Latino Parents: Key to Involvement

Graciela L. Orozco

Abstract

Schools often consider themselves experts in a child's education. While school personnel are trained to work with children and families and certainly have much experience in the matter, the perspective and values of low-income parents are not always understood nor incorporated into the school culture. Since parent involvement has been shown to positively affect academic outcomes, it becomes important to understand the potential contributions that low-income parents can make to their children's education. This article describes a qualitative case analysis that examined what low-income immigrant Latino parents had to say about their parenting roles on *La Placita Bilingüe*, a live call-in radio talk show produced by Radio Bilingüe, the national Latino public radio network. Four themes that reflect the values of 18 parents emerged from the analysis of 11 hours of Spanish-language, live call-in shows: (1) the special place of children in the family; (2) *saber es poder* – knowledge is power; (3) *querer es poder* – where there is a will, there is a way; and (4) the importance of culture and of being bilingual.

Keywords: low income, immigrants, Latinos, Hispanics, parents, radio, qualitative research, minorities, school counseling, academics, culture, families

Introduction

Parents guide, nurture, and teach their children in the context of the family's language and culture. Despite knowing this, schools often take the position of

being the experts in a child's education, discounting a child's culture and background. And while schools may value parent involvement, parent participation is not a true partnership (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). The expertise of parents, particularly low-income parents, is rarely taken into account (Lott, 2001, 2003). Low-income immigrant parents are often viewed as being indifferent to their children's schooling, failing to encourage their children's achievement, and, in general, placing low value on education. Low-income parents, due to social class, have unequal resources with which to participate in their children's schools (Lareau, 1987). Immigrant parents also internalize racist beliefs prevalent in U.S. society and come to see themselves as deserving lower status (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005).

Much research has been devoted to the home-school partnership and the importance of parent involvement as essential for children's academic success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). Teachers, however, have reported having little knowledge about the at-home involvement of parents with less than a high school education (Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Parker, 1999). While researchers have focused on the schools and the various strategies that school personnel can implement to improve parent involvement, there has been less research that takes into account the parents' frame of reference (Lawson, 2003). Minority parents, in particular, are untapped sources of knowledge and information about how minority children can be reached more effectively (Jones, 2003). One priority is fostering partnerships which engage parents and teachers in meaningful two-way communication, with both groups as active participants in the education of children (Baker et al.).

Research that focuses on parents and their points of view can help strengthen home-school partnerships. For example, from a participatory research project, Mawjee and Grieshop (2002) argue that language and culture must be taken into account in order to increase parental participation. Data from another study (Mapp, 2003) reveals that caring and trustful relationships with school staff enhances parents' desires to be involved in the schools. A focus group study of 34 parent leaders in a predominantly Mexican American school district finds that parents want teachers to be informed about the local Latino context as opposed to general Latino demographics (Jones, 2003).

A need exists to study low-income immigrant Latino parents in order to develop conceptual models that may explain how these parents view their participation in their children's lives and schooling. Too often the home-school partnership is studied from the point of view of school personnel, but not researched with respect to how the parents view their participation, particularly parents with few resources. What aspects of the social and cultural context in which these parents live and interact with their children are important for

school personnel to know? What theoretical constructs help us to shed light on the frame of reference of low-income immigrant Latino parents that would further develop the home-school partnership? Not only do we need to better understand how low-income immigrant parents see their participation in the schools, but equally important, research needs to be conducted in contexts that are unique to the lives of low-income participants (Lawson, 2003). This study turns to parents on a Spanish-language radio program to learn about what is important to them.

La Placita Bilingüe: The Village Square

This study examined parents who were volunteers on a radio program which is produced by Radio Bilingüe, the national Latino public radio network. On the air since 1998, *La Placita Bilingüe* is produced as a collaboration between Radio Bilingüe's Salinas, California station, KHDC 90.9 FM, and its Fresno, California station, KSJV 90.5 FM. Using an interactive conversational format in which guests call in to ask questions and state their opinions, the program recreates the brassy sounds of folksy music and the ambience of the plazas or *placitas* of Latin America, central gathering places in the communities where people come together to relax, exchange news, and share the latest happenings. *La Placita Bilingüe* was created with the idea that it would serve as a public medium for immigrant parents to discuss relevant parenting issues. The main author of this paper was the executive producer and host of *La Placita Bilingüe* during the first year of its airing. Previously, she had been a volunteer programmer and producer at Radio Bilingüe for fifteen years. Those experiences placed her in the unique position of a participant-observer and gave her multiple opportunities to interact with the parents.

Radio is considered to be an educational and empowering tool (Arnaldo, 1997; Jayaweera & Tabing, 1997; Price, 1997; Rockefeller Foundation, 1997), and for many less literate populations it is the medium of choice (Robinson, 1994; Solomon, 1997; Surlin, 1986). Radio can serve as an effective teaching tool and, in some cases, surpass traditional techniques (Bhola, 1989; Dave, Quane, & Perera, 1988). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has drawn attention to the educational potential of radio (Bhola) and at its 1985 Paris Conference recommended low-cost community radio, television, and other innovative technologies as a means to provide educational services (Dave et al.). Ethnographic studies in Latin America and in the U.S. (Hochheimer, 1993) acknowledge the role of radio as a successful educational and participatory medium (Crabtree, 1998; Huesca, 1995). Radio's popularity has to do with its capability for reaching large numbers of people, cost-effectiveness, and simplicity of use. It can also serve as a

culturally appropriate media tool, particularly since Spanish is the language of choice for many Latinos regardless of age and income. About 78% of Latinos living in the U.S. speak Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998).

Purpose of Study

This qualitative study was designed with the purpose of gaining fundamental knowledge about low-income immigrant Latino families and how they view their parenting roles in the United States. What do they value or prioritize as parents? The study presented in this article is a qualitative case analysis that describes and interprets what low-income immigrant Latino parents had to say about their parenting roles on a live call-in radio show, *La Placita Bilingüe*, a program produced by Radio Bilingüe, national Latino public radio in the United States.

Methodology

Participants

This study examines 11 hours of archival material containing 11 talk shows of *La Placita Bilingüe*. The number of parents on each of the shows varied from two to six for a total of 18 different parents on the 11 shows that are part of this study. Of the 18 parents, only 4 were on the air more than once, either two or three times each. Two of the 18 parents were not immigrants themselves, but they were the children of immigrants. Most of the parents were recruited at Head Start parent meetings in local areas. A few of the parents were recruited by professionals who worked at local agencies, usually non-profit agencies. All of the parents volunteered to be on the show and none had previous radio experience. The majority of the parents came from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with most of them engaged as farm workers. The parents who make up this sample were invited to come into the studio and participate in person on the shows. Parents participated on the shows using their real names, but this study has created pseudonyms for each participant.

Procedure

This study is based on 11 Spanish-language live call-in shows that were produced in 1998, the first year of *La Placita Bilingüe*. Each show was one hour in duration and included a pre-taped, four-minute mini-drama that introduced the topic. The mini-dramas are original work, written and produced by a talented young bilingual producer who is an immigrant to the United States. Topics that were covered on these shows are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: *La Placita Bilingüe* Program Topics

Physical Exams for Children
Natividad Medical Center
Language Development
Breastfeeding: Pros & Cons
Divorce: Impact on the Children
Circumcision: Advantages & Disadvantages
How to Handle an Angry Child
Learning Disabled Children
AIDS
Potty Training
How to Talk to Your Teens about Sex

Each live show was audiorecorded and then transcribed in Spanish by the researcher, who is bilingual in English and Spanish. Observational notes taken by the researcher following each production of the show also are part of this study. The taped shows were analyzed and categorized for content and language.

Data Analysis

The role of the researcher was that of participant-observer. She functioned as the executive producer and host of the show during the first year. She interacted regularly with the parents in terms of the planning and execution of the program. On many occasions she provided transportation to the parents because they could not otherwise come to the studios, as there was no public transportation system available to them. It is also important to know that the researcher was a regular volunteer of Radio Bilingüe between 1981 and 1996 and from 2001 to the present, involved in tasks such as programming, news production, translations, fundraising, and so on. Between 1996 and 2001, the researcher was primarily involved as a paid consultant to Radio Bilingüe in the area of development.

Data from the transcriptions were analyzed using an inductive grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop a conceptual framework based on the thick, detailed program transcripts of the interviewees. Notes and memos of the parents' on-air comments were categorized using tentative categories that were later refined and re-coded. Emerging themes common across parents who were in the studio and callers who called in to express an opinion or ask a question were identified and then later subsumed or expanded to accommodate new ones (Patton, 1990). Simple frequency counts, calculated by the number of people stating certain experiences or perceptions, helped identify salient themes.

Findings

Four Main Themes

Four main themes that focused on how parents viewed their parenting roles emerged from the analysis of the 11 talk shows: (1) the special place of children; (2) *saber es poder* – knowledge is power; (3) *querer es poder* – where there is a will, there is a way; and (4) the importance of culture and of being bilingual.

Theme 1: The Special Place of Children in the Family

The data indicated that these Latino parents often think about what is in the best interest of their children, which is consistent with other studies that indicate that for Latinos, the family plays a central role in their lives (Arredondo & Rodriguez, 2005; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). A recurring theme throughout the 11 radio programs and personal discussions with parents was the special place of children within the family. This "specialness" can perhaps be viewed in terms of the importance that family has among Latinos, particularly for immigrant Latinos who come from more collectivist societies where the family is supreme (Paniagua, 2005). The following quotes from Teresa, a divorced mother, and Pablo, a young father from a rural village of Central Mexico, address the importance of their children:

> If there's a problem and we (spouses) can't be together, one should think first of one's children. For me it was very difficult. But I said, my kids come first. There are many men….The children come first. First are the children. One suffers. But one learns to survive. (Teresa, single mother)

> My mother tells us that, if he (father) was without shoes, for example, she would tell him, here, keep this so that you can buy this or that. He would say, no, no, my children are always first. She would always tell us that she didn't have an example of him having mistreated her….When we got married, uh, all the time, she kept telling us, don't fight with your wives. Take care of the children, take good care of them, don't yell at your kids, because I never (emphasis on never) gave you that example and neither did your father….With the daughter that we have, I always talk to her using humor, in the way that they (children) talk, because they have quite an imagination, they talk about everything in their own way. So I always talk a lot to her. (Pablo, father)

Although not many men were guests on the show, the men who did participate on the show were open about the special place of their children in their lives. For example, Daniel very proudly said:

> It has been a wonderful experience to have a family, it has helped me a lot…Marisol is very special. She's very tender and at the same time, she's very independent, very active.…We do several games. I spend all day with my daughters. But it's not the time, but the quality of time that we give them. I have a schedule for playing with my daughters because I have lots of things to do. During the time that I play with them, they like to play with blocks a lot. They like to make houses. I help them put houses together. That's mainly what they like to play. Once in a while they like to paint. (Daniel, father)

A teacher who visits Daniel as part of her agency's services to help parents confirmed what he was saying:

> I visit with Daniel once a month. I really see him participating with his daughters because every month when I ask him, "what has Marisol done this month?" he tells me all the new words, what she has done; he really gives them quality time, enjoys his daughters, and they too enjoy being with him.

Theme 2: *Saber Es Poder* – Knowledge Is Power

Obtaining information seemed to be a priority for the parents on *La Placita Bilingüe,* as well as for the listeners who called in with comments and questions. Three programs (Circumcision: Advantages and Disadvantages, Toilet Training, and Language Development) had the highest number of callers with people asking basic knowledge-type questions. Dr. Antonio Velasco was the guest expert on the show; following are some of the questions from parents:

> I'm so happy to be listening to this program. I have so many doubts about this (male circumcision). When I had my child, he's now four years old, I took Lamaze classes, but I always had some reservations about speaking about this. I had a lot of doubts. I finally decided not to have it done on him, because my husband and I decided that he was going to go through too much pain, and he didn't need it. But now I have a doubt about what is the best way to maintain cleanliness. I bathe him and everything. I heard on TV one time that they were talking about pulling back the skin, and to rinse him when I bathe him. I tried doing this once and my little boy told me that it hurt him. Since then I am afraid to do it. Other people have told me that I need to wait until the child is older, at least to when he's twelve or thirteen years old and then his father can show him. The truth is I've wanted to find information on this and I haven't seen anything. I would like for Dr. Velasco to tell me what is the best way for my child to stay clean and to prevent any future infections? (Female caller)

> If they cut him right there, is it so that his penis won't grow or will it grow normal? Because right now, his penis is very tiny, just a little head, and that's another doubt that I have. (Irma, female parent on the show)

> Congratulations on your program, it's very interesting.…I have chosen to do the activity (regarding cleanliness) with my son. But for one reason or another, I have never asked the doctor if how I do it is correct or not. My question is: how much of the penis should come out when I pull his skin? Because I don't know. I don't know if I need to pull his skin more. (Female caller)

What kind of information did these immigrant parents need to help them become better parents? Since many of them have little formal schooling, they rely on radio programs and television for basic information on a variety of topics ranging from issues of sexuality and hospital services to becoming licensed childcare providers. On the potty training program, parents asked, among other things, whether their children were ready to be potty trained, how to begin potty training, and how to continue the training while traveling. The area of sex education also stood out as one requiring much attention. Preventative health, in general, seems to be a high priority because many of these families do not carry health insurance. One parent was amazed that there were experts who could talk on such a variety of topics on *La Placita Bilingüe*.

These examples are not unlike the information gathered by Orozco (2001), whose data suggested that Radio Bilingüe listeners tune in not only to be entertained, but also for information that improves the quality of their lives. Orozco found that people used information heard over the Radio Bilingüe airwaves to request psychological testing for attention deficit disorder, enroll children in the Healthy Families insurance program, to become citizens, and to participate publicly at Migrant Parent Committee meetings, among other things.

Immigrant parents who did not have an opportunity for an education in their home countries often feel vulnerable on their jobs and in their lives in the United States. Perhaps because of this, the desire to have their children succeed is very strong. With the parents who have been a part of this radio program, this desire to help their children has led them to programs like Head Start that encourages parent involvement, ESL classes, GED classes, counseling and support groups, and even programs at the local community college. The majority of the parents who were guests on the show tried to be involved at their children's schools. They were also involved with church groups and extracurricular activities with their children, suggesting that they are making an effort at learning new skills and in accommodating the new system. A few of the parents appeared to be less involved in school activities, but their dedication to being present at the school activities appeared to be important to them.

Theme 3: *Querer Es Poder* – Where There's a Will, There's a Way

Words from Teresa and other the mothers who participated on the program describe this third theme. Teresa clearly articulated the belief that where there is a will, there is a way. Like many of the other parents who were guests, Teresa's theory of getting ahead is based on the idea that in order to achieve, one must work hard. Teresa is a farm worker raising five children on her own. She has her children in sports, volunteers at her children's schools, and sits on various committees. She believes that she is helping her children by keeping them involved in many extracurricular activities. The hope is always there of creating a better future for her children. As limiting as her present conditions may be, she has bought into the idea that better opportunities lie ahead. She views current barriers following her divorce as temporary problems that will be overcome with hard work, time, and education.

> Time passes and one gets more strength, more courage. *Querer es poder, poder es querer*. If you want something, you can achieve it, you have the ability, all you need is the desire....Many times, one thinks, if I leave him, I'm not going to be able to live. It's not true. *Sí se puede*. It can be done. It can be done...I'm going to live for the future, to try and forget, even though you can't, but think instead of the children and see. (Teresa, single mother)

> From the beginning, I tried to look at it positively. It was very difficult, but I tried to look at it positively for my children. First of all, I didn't want to talk bad about him to them because I would be influencing their minds negatively. So from the beginning I would talk to them...the three of us would talk. I would tell them that there were only the three of us; that we needed to be real strong; that they needed to help me and that I was going to help them. That's how I've been towards them always. I have talked to them a lot. And I have been with them in school. I go with them everywhere. I have had them in sports. Perhaps that has helped them. I have always supported them. If they want to be in a sport, whatever sport, they have always been in a lot of sports. (Maribel, divorced mother)

Anita (speaking on anger management) is working to overcome personal barriers:

> When I first put my son in school I started going to the meetings, I would go to everything that I could. But that wasn't enough. It was not helping me. So one day, I started getting closer to the teacher...I had the opportunity to take classes in Spanish in this area and I began to get closer to the school. And now I have another child, I try, I am different. But

> one cannot change from night to day. It is hard, it is hard. You cannot change a negative attitude in a short time. It takes time. Little by little one starts adjusting and that's how, one takes two or three steps forward and one step backwards and that one that went backwards, DARN! (big sigh) One knows that one blew it again. But one continues onward, with the support of my teacher, that is a great teacher whom I admire (refers to another guest on the program), and she has been a blessing from God for me…she has allowed me to see, and I have learned, through her difficult assignments, with the dedication that I have in going to school, I now consider myself a new person. And I, too, am going to begin to work with children. (Anita, mother)

Theme 4: The Importance of Culture and of Being Bilingual

Parents talked about the importance of knowing two languages and how preserving their native language was a vehicle for preserving their culture. These parents also realized that it was up to them to help their children maintain their culture and their language.

> It is important to us that our kids learn Spanish because we come from Mexico, and we're going to return, or we are going to go back for a vacation, and it is important that they always speak Spanish because our parents and our families who have never come over here…to be able to communicate with them. If they can only speak English, they will not be able to use their English to communicate with them back there, so it is very important that they not lose the language or our culture. We need to show it to them. (Female caller)

How do parents, despite their own limitations in learning a second language, teach their children to learn a second language?

> When my daughter Rosita went to preschool, she was very confused. She saw kids who were speaking English, and she spoke Spanish. She was frustrated because she wanted to communicate with those kids. We had to explain to her that that language is English and that she would be able to speak it, that she would be able to learn how to speak it. And that we had to speak Spanish. She was confused. She would say, "I don't want to talk like that, I want to talk like them. So we had to talk to her. We had to explain to her that we come from Mexico. We speak Spanish. And that she is going to learn English. Now, she's been in preschool almost a year. And she now understands that the children speak English, that she speaks Spanish and that she is going to be able to learn English. It's very important that parents tell their kids that they are going to be able to

> speak the language that they want to. Because, in the case of the woman who says that in her house, they speak three languages, the kids can learn three or four or five languages, because, like the teacher says, kids are a sponge. The only thing is, we have to have a lot of patience and dedicate a lot of time to them. (Daniel, father)

> I am from a past generation. I am more than 70 years old. Those of us who are first generation here in the United States, it seems that we had an advantage over the people of today. At home, according to my parents' customs, we were not allowed to speak English at all. English was prohibited in our home. We spoke only Spanish, and only Spanish. Our parents would tell us, when you go beyond that door, you speak English and only English, unless it's necessary to speak Spanish. But when you come through that door to the inside, Spanish and only Spanish will be spoken here. As a consequence of that, we learned how to speak Spanish, how to read and write it at a very early age. (Male caller)

> (Society) only wants us to speak English. It is very difficult for us. We came to this country thinking that we were only going to work. We did not come here to further our education, our schooling…some of us parents do not know much English…with other people, we can take an interpreter, but with our own kids, it is a little more difficult. Sometimes we get criticized because we don't understand them. (Amanda, mother)

This last caller identifies an issue that parents face when they have not been able to learn English and no longer can communicate with their children. Their goal of achieving success through education becomes precisely the very thing that estranges them from their children. Immigrant parents face language and institutional barriers in the United States (National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations [NCHHHSO], 1996). A role reversal occurs in many instances where the children, who are learning English in school, are put in the position of interpreters for their parents. This situation can be particularly difficult because the traditional Hispanic culture holds its elders – grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles – in high esteem with a deep sense of respect for their advice, opinions, values, and ability to lead and provide for the family. When children are placed in positions of power over the parents, the traditional parental role is undermined, causing damage to the family system. Parents are not the only ones who suffer loss of esteem through the role reversal dynamic; children's self-esteem also suffers as they attempt to assume roles and responsibilities that are beyond their capabilities. Children's natural role models – parents – fall short of their expectations and thus fail to provide the leadership and stability required for the children's developing

self-esteem. Some professionals believe that enhancing the self-esteem of parents through increased knowledge, skills, and competence will result in the long-term development of positive self-esteem in their children (NCHHHSO). Parent involvement in the schools and society in general, according to Delgado-Gaitan (1990), must help parents acquire social competency and social literacy; the process of becoming literate about a culture is what empowers an individual or a group of individuals to participate fully in that culture.

Discussion

This study suggests that low-income parents are truly concerned about their children, have high hopes for them, and want to be involved in their children's schooling experiences. There is no doubt that immigrant parents bring many strengths with them (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1996). They are risk takers, people who dare to seek a new and improved life. Immigrants form their own folk theory of getting ahead based on the belief that education is the key to a better life (Ogbu, 1991). This general framework leads them to stress education as the way to job success. For this reason, parents admonish their children to obey their teacher, to do their school work, not to fight, keep trying harder, and so on. Immigrants function from a dual frame of reference, comparing their current situation with their former situation (Suarez-Orozco, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995), allowing them to endure difficult situations with the hope of creating a better future for their children. Often arriving with relatively little formal education, these newcomers are motivated by a desire for a better life, and they aspire to learn English and place their hopes on education as the basis for raising their standard of living (Trueba, 1999). Their present conditions, as limiting as these may be, offer evidence of the possibility of better opportunities in the new environment. Economic, political, and social barriers are viewed as more or less temporary problems that will eventually be overcome with hard work, time, and education. The parents, however, find that their new context takes on added meaning as they struggle to preserve their culture and language in the United States; they realize how integral culture and language become in their new lives. In raising their children, immigrant parents use beliefs and behaviors largely determined by their cultural and socioeconomic status (Zayas & Solari, 1994).

When observing the type of experience that *La Placita Bilingüe* afforded the parents who participated as guests on the program, the researcher observed how their confidence and self-esteem increased. One of the fathers on *La Placita Bilingüe* grew considerably from his participation. This particular father is originally from an isolated village in the highlands of Central Mexico where he

grew up knowing the importance of keeping to himself, because in his town, people settled their own disputes and used violence if they thought it appropriate. At school meetings, he never uttered a word. He and his wife agreed to be on the radio show, but when the live broadcast began, only his wife would make comments. On one of his visits to the live show, he saw a lot of guests and purposely chose a chair that was not part of the main group. The host insisted that he sit with the main group next to his wife and asked him a question to which he comfortably responded. That question broke the ice, and he returned to the live broadcast several times, even when his wife could not make it. Here was a father who found his voice and learned that his opinion was valued. On this radio show, lack of formal schooling was not a barrier. Even though he could barely write, he found himself dialoguing and sharing his ideas with hundreds of listeners. This parent felt respected and honored by the other parents and listeners of the radio show. Other studies (Mapp, 2003) have documented factors that influence parents' increased involvement in their children's education, such as when parents feel that their contributions are honored and when parents are able to establish caring and trusting relationships with school personnel.

Participating on a radio show gave these parents a new perspective of who they are. They began to see that they do know much about parenting and about raising their children. For example, several callers on the potty training program addressed themselves to a parent on the show as often as they did to the guest educator. One listener remarked that the parent spoke so naturally and she sounded "like one of us." That parent is from the state of Michoacán, one of the states in Mexico with the highest number of emigrants. She was once an abused teen mom. With six years of elementary education, she struggled to come to the United States where she remarried and started a new life. She smiled when she talked on the air about how she was raising her three boys. Following her radio participation, she became more active in parent groups and activities at her children's schools. She helped organize a fundraiser at Christmas time to raise money for the school and began volunteering in her children's classrooms, helping prepare materials and working with small groups of children. Regular attendance at a local ESL class became another one of her priorities. All of these new activities point to a new self-confidence discovered by this low-income parent. Not only is she involved in the education of her children, but she is also contributing to the improvement of schools that have high numbers of low-income minority children. The organizing and leadership efforts of this parent illustrate how relations can be transformed between parents and schools. In this new relationship with the school, the parent exercises social capital (Noguera, 2001), deriving status from a position respected by

others. The school also wins by having students who are academically motivated and parents who believe in and support the schools.

The theme of knowledge is power reflects an important value of these parents in that with knowledge comes access to power and access to a better life. At one level, *La Placita Bilingüe* provides simple facts and information. However, at another level, the program offers a space where immigrant families can network, gain new perspectives, feel motivated through mutual encouragement, and learn about indispensable resources like children's health insurance, available library services, special needs of children, and so forth. A key part of the show's secret for success lies beyond giving simple pieces of information to how the information is presented so that it is understandable to low-income parents who have little formal schooling. Information is presented in a culturally appropriate format, using language and style with which people can identify. The richness of the Spanish language and the use of humor, double meanings, and metaphors give the show credibility and appeal to the sensibilities of the community. Listeners of Radio Bilingüe have previously described the programming as credible and serious:

> Well for me, it's a station that has a lot of credibility. They give information that is really truthful, and when they inform, they don't just speak for the sake of speaking or because they want to sell something. That's why I like it, because it has lots of credibility. They do give you information as it should be and at a level you can understand. That's very important. The language can be the same one, but depending on how you say it, sometimes it doesn't mean anything. (listener quoted in Orozco, 2001, p. 83)

Recommendations for Educators

Perhaps the strongest recommendation that stands out for educators is the need to approach low-income immigrant Latino parents from a strengths-based perspective. At its simplest level, this means that educators must set aside preconceived notions of low-income parents as not having anything to offer to the education of their children. All parents, regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, race, ability/disability, sexual orientation, or religious orientation, have a rich culture – including their history, language, and traditions – that deserves to be honored, respected, and cultivated. Valuing that background is the basis of a climate that welcomes and calls all parents to be involved in their children's schools. Involvement is a two-way process where parents are knowledgeable about what is taking place with their children's education, and educators understand, embrace, and seek input from the communities from which the children come (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

Limitations

The parents in this study are not representative of all Latinos or of all parents who listen or call in to *La Placita Bilingüe*. Since the study involved a relatively small sample size, generalization to the larger population is limited. This study also relies on data that are self-reported. Since these conversations took place publicly, it may also be that individuals were affected by the public nature of the programs and self-embellished, limited their self-disclosure, or under-reported.

Conclusion

Although low-income immigrant parents are often considered apathetic regarding their children's schooling and accused of placing low value on education, this study found that parents were very interested in their children's future through education. This study of parents who had no previous radio experience suggests ideas for building on the cultural strengths of immigrant parents in ways that empower them and help them grow. This study found that these Latino immigrant parents believe that their children are special and want the best for them. These parents are willing to work hard to improve their lives, and they know how important it is to have knowledge or education. On *La Placita Bilingüe*, low-income immigrant parents are considered to be experts in raising their children, and they certainly rise to the expectation.

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Family Involvement in a Hawaiian Language Immersion Program

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Abstract

This study investigated the ways in which family members of students in a Hawaiian language immersion program were involved in their children's education and identified the effects of and barriers to involvement. A sociocultural theoretical approach and Epstein's framework of different types of involvement were applied. Participants included 35 families whose children were enrolled in Papahana Kaiapuni, a K-12 public school program in Hawai'i. The program uses the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants about their program experiences. Kaiapuni family involvement practices were consistent with Epstein's typology. Consistent with previous research on family involvement in other contexts, Type 2 (school-home communications) and Type 3 (voluntary involvement) were prevalent. However, different from previous reports, participants were more involved in school decision making (Type 5). Families felt that their involvement promoted (a) the development of children's values, (b) family and community bonding, (c) children's English language learning, and (d) family members' learning about Hawaiian language and culture. The most frequently mentioned barrier to involvement was a lack of proficiency in the Hawaiian language.

Key Words: family involvement, parents, immersion programs, indigenous education, native language instruction, Hawaiian language, culture, Hawai'i

Introduction

United States national policy includes the promotion of family-school partnerships to improve student achievement (Goals 2000). Studies of family involvement practices have consistently identified the important role that families play in their children's learning. In their review of the literature, Henderson and Mapp (2002) identified three predictors of students' achievement across SES groups: (a) a home environment that encourages learning, (b) family's high expectations for their children's achievement and careers, and (c) family involvement in children's education at school and in the community. In general, the literature suggests that there is less involvement among poor, single-parent, less educated, and minority families (Comer, 1988; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Lareau, 1989; Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Unfortunately, teachers may believe minority and other non-mainstream families are uninvolved or uninterested in their children's education (Chavkin, 1993; Clark, 1983; O'Connor, 2001; Valdés, 1996). These beliefs persist despite evidence that regardless of ethnic, racial, or minority status, most families want their children to succeed in school and wish to be highly involved (Epstein, 1990; Met Life, 1987).

The purposes of this study were (a) to investigate the ways in which family members of students in Papahana Kaiapuni, a Hawaiian language immersion program, were involved in their children's education, and (b) to identify the effects of and barriers to their involvement. The Papahana Kaiapuni program includes a diverse group of families with the majority of them being Hawaiian (note: in this paper we use Hawaiian and Native Hawaiian interchangeably to refer to people of Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian ancestry). These indigenous people of Hawai'i represent approximately 20% of the state's population (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Although most researchers have studied *parental* involvement, we broadened our focus to include involvement by other family members, as Native Hawaiian households often include extended family members, including grandparents (Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005). Approximately 25% of all Native Hawaiian households with children include live-in grandparents, one third of whom share child caretaking responsibilities.

The Hawaiian Language Immersion Program

This study focused on Papahana Kaiapuni, a K-12 public school program that uses the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). Formal English instruction in the Kaiapuni program begins in Grade 5. Although most Kaiapuni students enter the program in kindergarten

primarily as English or Hawai'i Creole English speakers, most respond to their teachers in Hawaiian by the end of the year (Slaughter, 1997). The program is open to all students, although the majority of students and their families are part-Hawaiian. In the 2004-2005 school year, there were 19 Kaiapuni sites on all major islands in the state of Hawai'i, enrolling approximately 1,500 students (Hawai'i State Department of Education, 2005). At the start of the current study (1999-2000), there were 17 Kaiapuni sites throughout the Hawaiian islands. All but two of these schools also housed the more typical program conducted in the English language.

The Kaiapuni program began in 1987, after intense lobbying from Hawaiian language speakers and activists (Wilson, 1998). Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the Hawaiian language was banned from all governmental activities, including public education. This ban marked the beginning of a decline in the number of Hawaiian speakers. In the 1970s, there was renewed interest in Hawaiian history and culture. By the 1980s, the language was viewed as being at risk for language extinction, with some estimates suggesting that there were fewer than 30 speakers under the age of 18 (Heckathorn, 1987). The grassroots movement to promote the language has been associated with a broader renaissance of Hawaiian culture and coincides with a revival of interest in indigenous cultures and ethnic studies (Benham & Heck, 1997).

The Kaiapuni program is a more culturally compatible form of education for Hawaiians because of its emphasis on Hawaiian language and culture. Program evaluations suggest that Kaiapuni students were as proficient in English as their non-immersion peers and also attained a high level of proficiency in Hawaiian (Slaughter, 1997). Kaiapuni supporters suggest that beyond language revitalization outcomes, the program may also be more effective in teaching Hawaiian children than is typical of the English language public school program (Benham & Heck, 1998; Yamauchi, Ceppi, & Lau-Smith, 1999, 2000). Compared to other peers, Hawaiian students tend to score lower on standardized measures of achievement, have higher drop out and grade retention rates, and are over-represented in special education and under-represented in post-secondary education (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003; Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 1994, 2006; Takenaka, 1995; University of Hawai'i Institutional Research Office, 2002).

Most of the Kaiapuni sites operated as a "school within a school" on a campus that also housed the more traditional English language program (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). At the time of this study, there were two K-12 Kaiapuni schools that were exclusively for Hawaiian medium instruction. There were also fewer students in middle and high school programs, more demands for

specific curriculum, and a shortage of certified secondary teachers who spoke Hawaiian. As a result, students in some of the secondary school sites took English language classes for subjects such as mathematics and science and enrolled in Hawaiian immersion for the rest of the day.

The Kaiapuni program has been known for its family involvement. A group that included parents who were involved in a private Hawaiian immersion preschool initiated the K-12 program (Wilson, 1998). These family members wanted their children to continue their education in the Hawaiian language. When conducting research on the program's initiation, we interviewed a school board member who had supported the program becoming part of the public schools (Yamauchi et al., 1999). The board member said that within the public school system, he thought the Kaiapuni program had the most intensive family involvement in the public schools, second only to athletics. We conducted this study to determine whether families were involved in ways that were different from other settings and to examine the effects of and barriers to involvement.

A Multidimensional Approach to Family Involvement

Researchers typically measure family involvement as a unidimensional construct, although there is evidence for its multidimensionality (Ho & Willms, 1996; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). Involvement is often defined in narrow ways that are based on family members being visible in educational settings, for example, as volunteers at school. An alternative view, such as that provided by Epstein's framework, also includes family members' involvement at home and in the community (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein identifies six types of family involvement practices: (a) parenting practices to meet basic needs or to create an educational home environment, (b) home-school communication, (c) participation as volunteer or audience, (d) home learning activities, (e) participation in school-related decision making, and (f) knowledge and use of community resources.

We used this multidimensional framework because it helped clarify whether certain types of families are really not as involved, or are involved in ways that are not as visible to school personnel. For example, Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) studied families of low-income preschool children. They found that although the educational level of the primary caregiver was related to school-based involvement and home-school communication, there was no effect for home-based practices. Analyzing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Peng and Wright (1994) found that, compared to other groups, Asian American parents spent less time directly assisting students with school assignments. However, these parents had the greatest expectations for higher education. We were interested in whether Kaiapuni families were involved in ways that were different from other groups described in the literature.

Sociocultural Theory

We were also interested in whether participation in the program affected participants' views on being Hawaiian and the Hawaiian culture. Although Epstein's framework was helpful in identifying different ways that Kaiapuni families were involved in education, we also applied sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to assist in explaining how those activities influenced development. Sociocultural theory suggests that social interactions within a particular community are the basis for the development of individuals' ways of thinking. For example, we were interested in whether family involvement was related to the development of family members' ideas about education or about Hawaiian culture and language. Writing from such a perspective, Rogoff (1995) described how participation in activities can "transform" individuals' understandings about themselves and the world around them. Thus, involvement in certain educational activities may shape family members' views about their roles in education and other related issues.

Method

Participants

Thirty-five families participated in the study, including 17 with children in elementary school, 13 in middle school, and 5 in high school. The mothers of each family participated, as well as 8 of the fathers. In one case, a mother and two grandparents were involved. The participants' ages ranged from 29- to 60-years old, with a mean of 41.7 years. Of the participants, 83% (n = 38) reported that they were of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry. The ethnicity of the remaining participants included European American (n = 4), Japanese American (n = 1), combinations of Asian and European American (n = 2) and a combination of American Indian and European American (n = 1).

We recruited at least two families from each of the 17 school sites in existence in 1999. A "snowball" method of recruitment was used such that initial participants were recruited through the Hawai'i State Department of Education and other program contacts. These early participants nominated subsequent potential interviewees.

Procedure

Between the years 1999 and 2000, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants about their program experiences. When there was more than one participant from the same family, they were interviewed together. The interviews were part of a larger investigation of family perspectives on

the program. (See the Appendix for the interview questions.) Each interview was 60-120 minutes long and was audiotaped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

For the larger study, members of the research team read through all transcripts and discussed themes that emerged from the responses. One of the themes was "family involvement." Once consensus was met regarding the themes and sub-themes, the researchers coded each transcript. Initially, the researchers coded two of the same transcripts independently, and met to establish consensus on coding criteria. Once consensus was met, the same process was repeated for two more transcripts to attain consensus across two coders. After this process, the remaining transcripts were divided among the authors, and these transcripts were coded independently.

In a second round of coding, the authors examined excerpts coded earlier under "family involvement" and further coded these data according to Epstein's six types of involvement practices and for "barriers to involvement" and "effects of involvement." The group established criteria for the coding and coded one set of excerpts as a group. After meeting to discuss discrepancies and to further refine the coding criteria, the remaining excerpts were divided and coded independently.

Results

In this section we present our results from the perspective of Epstein's six types of family involvement practices. We also present the effects of and barriers to family participation in the Kaiapuni program (note: all given names are pseudonyms).

Type 1: Parenting

Families discussed the ways in which they structured their home environments to be more conducive to learning. Fourteen participants said that they provided books in both English and Hawaiian languages to encourage reading. Three parents said that they provided English-Hawaiian dictionaries, and two mentioned providing a computer to assist children with school assignments.

We did not explicitly ask about basic parenting activities, and thus, participants' responses generally did not reflect this aspect of Type 1 involvement. However, one mother talked about how she focused more on her son's individual needs, rather than spending time at parent meetings and other school activities:

> He's just one of those that needs more one-on-one…so as a parent…I focus more on him, staying away from the [parent association]…I was really bad in the meetings…I did maybe two or three meetings…I did several fundraiser meetings for [the] golf tournament. Couldn't attend all of them like I usually did, just [because] I needed to stay home with him. (Makamae)

Type 2: School-Home Communication

The majority of the families reported having frequent contact with their children's teachers. Thirteen family members said that teachers made themselves available, day or night. As one parent noted, "I call the teacher at home.…Everything is just call the teacher at home…that is our line to the whole school system" (Sarah). In addition to telephone calls, parents said that they communicated with teachers through written student planners, progress reports, and through formal and informal meetings. Formal meetings included open house, conferences, orientations, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Informal meetings occurred when family members dropped off or picked up their child from school and stopped to chat with the teacher about their child's progress and other topics. Teachers also spoke informally with families outside of school or at school functions. One parent described her child's teacher as more of a friend or family member:

> We're very good friends with the teacher. It's close-knit. [For] example, my daughter does something bad in school, I can tell her, "I'm going to talk to your teacher this evening." And she knows that the teacher sometimes comes over for dinner. It's not like a public school system where the teacher is there and not part of the family unit. (Leilani)

Although this was the only family member who mentioned that her family invited their teacher to dinner, other participants talked about the close, family-like relationships they had with teachers, and how this was different from their experience in the English language program.

Type 3: Volunteer or Audience

Similar to what is reported in the literature for families in other communities, Kaiapuni families said that they participated as audience members for school functions. Twenty-five participants said they attended sporting events, concerts, and other school productions. Families said there were many ways that they volunteered in the program. They suggested that fundraising was the most common way that families were involved. Families raised money for student transportation, classroom activities, sports tournaments, field trips,

and other events. Eleven families said that fundraising for transportation was a particular concern, as many students lived outside their school district, and transportation was not provided by the state. One participant explained, "Our whole thing is to support our school, so [we're] fundraising all the time.…Our big thing now is $24,000 for one bus for one year" (Aolani). The largest fundraising event was the *Ho`omau* concert, organized collectively by volunteers from all Hawaiian language immersion schools statewide. Thousands of people attended this annual musical concert in Honolulu that raised up to $14,000 for each school.

Twenty-five families also said that they volunteered to help teachers both in and out of the classroom. Participants said they chaperoned for excursions, camping trips, and neighbor islands visits. Many schools had a *lo'i* [taro patch], and families volunteered to work there. Other parents said that they volunteered to assist with curriculum development. For example, a few families mentioned volunteering to work in "cut and paste sessions." These sessions were organized to create Hawaiian translations of English texts. Volunteers cut out typed Hawaiian translations of English books and pasted them over the original text. Those who participated did not necessarily need to speak Hawaiian.

Type 4: Home Learning Activities

Kaiapuni family members said that they were involved with learning at home in a number of ways. Fourteen participants said that they read to or encouraged their children to read. Those who could speak in Hawaiian read to their children in both languages. However, most family members thought their role was to reinforce English language learning. This was particularly true before Grade 5, when formal English language instruction began in the program. One mother explained how she articulated this to other families:

> Other parents, they would take their child out because the English skills weren't strong enough. And they would say, "Well, because my daughter doesn't read English." I [say], "That's your job. You put your child here because it's an immersion program, and the teachers are there to teach your child Hawaiian language, culture, and all that. Your job as a parent is to teach them the English skills." (ʻŌlena)

Family members reinforced school learning at home by checking that homework was completed and providing assistance as needed. Older siblings sometimes provided homework assistance to younger children. Parents felt that sibling help was particularly important in later years because many adult family members did not speak Hawaiian. Other home learning activities included discussions and activities that incorporated Hawaiian language and culture. One

mother said that she and her son talked about what he was learning in school and how it related to their family's activities. For example, they talked about the *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian creation chant:

> [My son] would ask me things like, in the *Kumulipo*, which is the creation chant, where does God fit in that?…You know these are all questions, and this is deep…we'd talk, and I'd say…this is mommy's *mana'o* [opinion]. This is how I see it. (Angela)

Type 5: Family Participation in Decision Making and Leadership

There were a number of levels at which families were involved in decision making in the Kaiapuni program. At each school, there were two parent groups, one specifically for the immersion program and one for the more typical PTA. Although two participants mentioned participating in the PTA group, others saw this organization as primarily involved in the English language program. Families most frequently mentioned their immersion program parent group as a way that they were involved in school decision making. The groups were forums to deliberate on school issues and develop action plans. Some decisions were more mundane, for example, deciding when a school event might be held. Other decisions held greater consequences, for example, deliberating on whether their program should apply for charter school status. In some cases, the parent organization provided input into how funds would be spent:

> We had to make real heartbreaking kinds of decisions…decisions about money, where does it go? And who gets what, how much do the classrooms get?…The hard decisions are always money. Where to get it and how to spend it.…It always boils down to parents. You're the decision makers, and you've got to toe the line. (Sarah)

The parent groups often convened committees that made decisions about specific aspects of the program. For example, many sites had a curriculum committee to review and provide feedback on the curriculum. One father noted that the families at his school met "regularly and talked about what curriculum there should be, if there should be changes, what changes" (Chris). Participants said there were discussions in parent groups about when English should be formally taught in the program, an issue that continued to be controversial.

Finally, families reported that they were often politically active in advocating for Hawaiian immersion programs statewide. Nineteen families talked about how they and others attended rallies at the state capital, provided testimony, and lobbied the state legislature and school board. This work was necessary because the program did not have guaranteed funding each year. One parent described the intensity and importance of this work:

> Every four years we have to go and make sure the legislature gives us money. It's not a done deal. We have to keep at it. That means I gotta go call people on the phone – Congress or my representatives. Gotta go down the whole list. Gotta e-mail everybody. Sometimes we have to march. It sucks. I guess the program could be finished at somebody's whim if they didn't want to fund it. (Cecilia)

Type 6: Knowledge and Use of Community Resources

Almost all families said that they used community resources to support their children's education program. These families identified resources that they accessed to enhance their children's school learning. These included sports programs, college courses, programs for English language learning, and Hawaiian cultural programs and activities. Three families shared that it was important for them to be aware of available community resources that could support their children's learning in the Hawaiian language immersion program. One parent shared that she felt the Kaiapuni program needed a community liaison to assist parents in accessing community resources and to support the development of the program.

> Each public school has what they call a PCNC. It's a community facilitator…that person…links up the…families, the community, [and] the school. Kula Kaiapuni could benefit greatly from that type of a program. 'Cause when you draw the community into the school…you make the community feel like they own the school. Then the community will participate in terms of decision making…. (Sarah)

Positive Effects of Involvement

Families said that their educational involvement affected both children and adults in their family. Specifically, their involvement promoted (a) the development of children's values, (b) family and community bonding, (c) children's English language learning, and (d) family members' learning about Hawaiian language and culture.

Values Development

Six families mentioned that involvement in their children's education influenced the development of important values. Kauanoe suggested that through her involvement she modeled values she wanted her children to learn, "I'm able to be their role model in illustrating discipline and commitment, and respect." Another mother noted that the values she and her parents reinforced with her son at home were the same that he learned in school:

> I feel that he's centered because he knows…what he's learning in school is the same thing he's learning at home. And we work closely with Kaiapuni values and our own values together. So he's surrounded. He's very centered. (Lokelani)

'Anela felt that her family's involvement in the program demonstrated to her children that hard work was needed for good outcomes. She explained that her children recognized that their school could not exist without the efforts of many families.

> They understand that…with everything, there comes a price. And [they] have to learn to work hard and earn what it is that they get. That way, hopefully, we've instilled some sort of appreciation for what they have because many times over…they take things too lightly and think it's just, it's so easy to get it done.

Family and Community Bonding

Related to the development of shared values, families noted that their educational involvement increased bonding within the family and the broader community of people associated with their schools. June recognized that her family's involvement in the Kaiapuni program led to family cohesion, "Everybody [in the family] played a part in it. From my oldest child to my youngest. Both my husband and [me]. So, you know, it just was really neat. Sense of closeness, I guess." Iris suggested that her involvement sent a message to her children that she cared about them, "I think kids like to know that their parents care enough to be involved." 'Anela suggested that her involvement led to her children confiding in her more often: "Our involvement with our kids in the program has been real beneficial for them.…[They know] that there is someone that they can confide in. Like who better than to confide in than their parents?"

In addition to bonding within their own families, participants said that their involvement created a sense of community in the program. Through their participation, families got to know each other and were supportive. One parent pointed out how this happened when many families worked together:

> Bonds are created when we do have fundraisers, like for instance we have a *kulolo* [a taro dessert] fundraiser, and the whole family gets involved. So bonds are created between families, and the children learn to respect each other more. ('Iolani)

English Language Learning

Four family members talked about how their involvement promoted their children's English language proficiency. Because the Kaiapuni program did not

begin formal English language instruction until Grade 5, many families felt that it was their responsibility to emphasize English literacy at home. One mother explained that the students "get introduced to [English language instruction]…late in elementary school, and if they can't read a road sign by fifth grade, something's wrong at home" (Iris). The participants described how their efforts to read to and with their children in English were helpful in developing English language skills. Lokelani described how she answered her son's questions about English,

> He asks me, "Oh that's [an English] word, yeah mom? How do you say that?" I can't teach him every English rule, but when he asks me, I'll answer him. "How come it's /ch/ sound?" I'm like, when you see the "c" and the "h" together, it's /ch/ sound. "Oh, so it's chips?" And that's the end of English. I don't push it or shove it down his throat or anything. When he asks, then I acknowledge it.

Hawaiian Culture and Issues

Families discussed how their educational involvement led to family members learning about Hawaiian culture and language. One parent recalled that she was sometimes unsure whether her children appreciated her family's efforts to learn about Hawaiian dance and language, but later realized they did:

> I had to force my daughters to go hula for years and years and years, and it was a struggle. And I never saw anything until we went to the Merrie Monarch [a prestigious hula competition]. They had performed, and they walked off the stage. And they were backstage, and one daughter turns to the other daughter and says, "Wow, I'm so happy mommy [forced us to] go *hula*." A little comment like that…I just started crying, and they couldn't understand why I was crying. 'Cause it's a struggle at times. ('Iolani)

Although one of the goals of the Kaiapuni program was for children to learn about Hawaiian issues, participants felt that they and others in their families who were not enrolled in the program also benefited. For example, Makamae described how her daughters, who were not in the program, got to know their brother's Kaiapuni teachers. The young women were professional hula dancers and often needed to translate songs from Hawaiian to English. They would sometimes ask a Kaiapuni teacher for assistance.

> Malia would ask every once in a while…she'll have a song that she needs to [translate]. She'll try and translate it herself…then she'll call one of her aunties over here. All these *kumu* [teachers] are like aunties to her.

Another parent suggested that the Kaiapuni program helped her to return to her Hawaiian culture.

> It's made me more aware. The issues, Hawaiian issues…growing up, I was raised by Hawaiian grandparents [who] spoke Hawaiian. And I guess the values and the cultural values that they [instilled are] there, but as you get older and they're no longer there, it kinda disappears, and you can't continue it…with the Hawaiian language it's helped me to at least bring that part back…made me recognize what my values are. (Kanoe)

Barriers to Involvement

Families reported a number of barriers to being involved in their children's education. The most frequently mentioned barrier was an inability to speak Hawaiian. According to the Hawai'i State Department of Education, at the time of our study, approximately 20% of Kaiapuni parents were Hawaiian language speakers (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). One participant talked about how the private Hawaiian immersion preschools required parents to learn the language in order for their children to enroll in the program. Within a public school system, Kaiapuni educators could not mandate such parental participation; however, 'Anela felt this hurt the program:

> The biggest barrier and biggest downfall for Kaiapuni is not in some way mandating [Hawaiian language learning among parents]…how do you get these parents to realize that they're not helping their children? If they expect their children to excel in the language program, they have to be there to support them in every which way possible.

'Anela noted that there were a number of resources that family members could draw upon for Hawaiian language learning, including courses offered at community colleges, by the private immersion preschools, and informal classes she herself held in her home.

Participants who did not speak Hawaiian also realized that this was a barrier to their involvement. One such parent said that the fundraising and other parent involvement activities distracted her from learning the language, "Just… planning for the fundraiser, takes time…it's like weeks and weeks of planning. And that's what I put on the side, my language" (Puanani).

In addition to not speaking Hawaiian, participants also mentioned time and transportation as barriers to their participation. This is illustrated by one parent's description of her family's "typical" day:

> A typical day is very hectic…get up, out the door, and because we're out of district, we have to get up even earlier and rush these kids to the bus stops or drive them to school, so I drive…I think I put in extra 15, 20

> miles every day, just getting to these schools for these kids. Dropping them off, all day, picking them up. Then the homework sets in and you gotta try your best to decipher their homework. And I'm a…4-year taker of the language. And I find it difficult, at 3rd, 4th grade. (Lilinoe)

Some families said that they "burned out" after a few years of being highly involved, noting that involvement could be exhausting. Those with other children who did not attend the program said that they often felt the intense involvement was unfair to those family members. One mother cautioned other families to balance being involved in the program and also attending to the family's other needs. When two daughters who were not in the immersion program graduated from high school, she realized that she had paid little attention to their needs:

> There was a lot of neglecting going on…I blame the program because that's all we did…it was only immersion, immersion, immersion. Meetings, parties, gatherings, everything…the two girls didn't have a choice there. They had to clean up after us. They had to provide for us. They had to babysit when we had meetings here. They had to do it. They didn't have a say. And I really feel bad about that part. (Makamae)

The intensity of program participation also created tension in families in which only one parent was committed to their children being in the program. One participant said that she appreciated that both she and her husband were committed to their children's enrollment: "There are many, many, many parents in Kaiapuni, where it's only one *makua* [parent] who wants it. And they struggle. And in the long run, depending on who's stronger, they pull out" ('Iolani).

Two families from one particular school said that a barrier to their involvement was that some of the educators did not want to hear parent voices. Finally, parents said that factions within parent groups often developed and this dissuaded them from participating. As one parent said, "The ideal thing would be for us to be *pili* [be unified, work together]…it's our responsibility to *pili*…our parents don't all *pili*.…We're still fractured" (Lani).

Discussion

Kaiapuni families reported participating in school involvement practices that were consistent with Epstein's typology (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Similar to previous research on family involvement in other contexts, Type 2 (school-home communications) and Type 3 (volunteer or audience) involvement were prevalent (Epstein & Dauber; Yap & Enoki, 1995). Yap and

Enoki suggest that educators tend to narrowly define parental involvement by focusing on families' communications with schools as the primary ways that they participate. However, different from what has been reported in the literature, families in our study often telephoned teachers at home with questions and concerns. This is consistent with a previous study suggesting that Kaiapuni teachers viewed their relationships with students and their families as similar to that of extended family members (Yamauchi et al., 2000).

Also different from what has been reported elsewhere, our findings suggest that Kaiapuni families were more involved in school decision making than has been reported in other studies. Participants said that they made decisions about curriculum, program priorities, and how money would be spent. Families also were politically active by providing testimony to the state board of education and legislature. A prior study of Kaiapuni teachers showed that, like the parents, their involvement in the program promoted political activism (Yamauchi et al., 2000).

Research suggests that parental involvement can have positive effects on children and their families. There is substantial evidence that parental involvement is related to higher academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In our study, however, participants tended to focus on the effects of their involvement on the development of children's values and family and community bonding. The only academic effect mentioned was English language learning, which a number of participants felt was the responsibility of families because of Kaiapuni's emphasis on Hawaiian language. Research on family involvement has also suggested that involvement can influence adult family members in positive ways. For example, O'Connor (2001) found that low-income parents' involvement in schools promoted their sense of identity and increased their employment opportunities. Results from the current study suggest that participants' involvement in the Kaiapuni program increased their own knowledge and interest in Hawaiian culture. This was also the case for other children in the family who were not enrolled in the program.

Creating Different Roles for Family Involvement

The Kaiapuni program may be more successful in promoting a greater range of involvement practices because of the unique roles that have developed for families. For example, the greater emphasis on decision making and political advocacy may be related to the history of the program as a grassroots effort that developed through the political efforts of families and other activists (Wilson, 1998; Yamauchi et al., 1999). Such a history may have created an expectation that families would take a political role in garnering program support. The immersion parent groups at each school appear to be forums for family input on

important program policies. This is different from more typical school PTAs that often serve primarily informational and fundraising roles. We also noted that a statewide advisory council was created to make recommendations on matters concerning the program. The advisory council consisted of parents, educators, and community members from all of the islands. Council participation is another example of roles created for families to be more involved in making decisions.

Overcoming Barriers

Participants in the current study noted a number of barriers to family participation in the program. The most frequently mentioned barrier was inability to speak the Hawaiian language. This is similar to difficulties experienced by other monolingual families whose children attend bilingual programs. For example, being able to help their children with homework was the biggest worry for monolingual English-speaking parents of students in a Spanish-English program (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000). A few families in our study dealt with this issue by asking older siblings to assist with homework and focusing on areas where adults could participate as English speakers. Some participants who were Hawaiian speakers appeared irritated by their perceptions that some other parents would not take the time to learn the language. Clearly, this has been an area of contention. We have heard of program meetings that were conducted in the Hawaiian language, where parents who were non-speakers of the language used Hawaiian-English translators to communicate. Although this does raise the status of the Hawaiian language, it may also inhibit some family participation.

A number of barriers to family involvement have been noted in the literature. Educators may have inaccurate perceptions about low-income, ethnic or racial minorities, and non-traditional families. They may believe these families are less invested and interested in education and less effectual in promoting positive outcomes (Chavkin, 1993; Clark, 1983; Valdés, 1996). One study found that teachers held stereotypical views of low-income and minority families until they interacted with these parents. After working with such families, the teachers no longer held biased attitudes and tended to agree that all families, regardless of income level or ethnic group, wanted to be involved in their children's education and held high expectations for them (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1990). The majority of families who participate in the Kaiapuni program are Hawaiian, an ethnic group that has a long history of negative academic outcomes. Although the program involves self-selection of families who enroll their children in a special program, our study suggests that there are many ways that Hawaiian families can be involved. There are lessons for

educators who work with families such as ethnic minorities and others who have historically not appeared to be as involved in school affairs. Educators may promote family participation by increasing the ways people can be engaged. It may be particularly important for families to have opportunities to engage in decision-making processes. Such engagement may lead families to feel more ownership of and responsibility for schooling, leading to a greater sense of efficacy.

Limitations

This study was limited by its small sample size, and results may not generalize to other family members in and outside the Kaiapuni program. Participants were also volunteers who were nominated by others in the program. It is possible that these families were more involved than others in the program. The data involved self-report, and participants may also have responded in socially desirable ways either because they wanted to please the researchers or to portray a positive image of the program.

Future Research

Data for this study were collected in the 1999-2000 school year. It would be helpful to investigate whether family involvement has changed since then, as some of the characteristics of Kaiapuni families are different. For example, at the time data were collected, it was estimated that 20% of all the adult family members who had a child enrolled in the Kaiapuni program spoke the Hawaiian language at home. By 2006, this had decreased to 5% (V. Malina-Wright, personal communication, February 24, 2006). Educators attributed the decline in Hawaiian speaking households to an earlier cohort effect. Initial participation in Kaiapuni consisted of families of Hawaiian language university professors and other language activists who already spoke Hawaiian at home. More recently, families in the program tended to reflect the more general population of non-Hawaiian speakers.

Future research could also address whether involvement practices revealed in this study also exist in other language immersion and indigenous educational programs. It would be helpful to more closely examine the relationships between family involvement and student and family outcomes. Finally, longitudinal research is needed to trace the developmental trajectory of family participation, illuminating involvement over time and the effects of and influences on participation.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Would you state your name and spell it for us?
2. If you don't mind, would you tell us your age?
3. What is your ethnicity? (If multiple, is there one that you particularly identify with?)
4. Where did you grow up?
5. Can you tell us a little about your family? Who lives with you and how they are related?

6. What high school did each of you attend? Could you describe your post-secondary education and that of the other adults in your household?
7. What is your current occupation and that of the other adults in your household?
8. Do you speak Hawaiian?
   a. If yes, from whom? Why did you decide to learn the language?
   b. If no, do you think it affects your involvement with the school? Does it affect your working with your child? If so, how?
9. What role does the Hawaiian language play in your lives? (family and individuals)
10. How long have you been involved in the Kaiapuni program?
11. What roles have you played in the program? What kinds of school related activities have you been involved in? How often?
12. Can you tell us about each of your children's educational history? Where they have gone to school, where they go now, and what grades they are in? (Pünana Leo?)
13. Why did you choose to enroll your child in Kaiapuni? Could you talk through the process of how you heard about the program, what you considered and why you decided to send them to this particular school?
    a. Follow up question: Roles they played in the decision making process; importance of perpetuation of Hawaiian.
    b. Follow up question: Why leaving English-only or Kaiapuni for different children.
14. What are your goals for your child in terms of his or her education? (in general)
15. What were you expecting when you first enrolled your child in the Kaiapuni program? Were your expectations met or not?
16. Could you compare Kaiapuni with the English only program? (Any differences for students? Any differences for families?) How do you know?
17. What do you like about the Kaiapuni program?
18. What would you like to see changed or improved?
19. How long do you intend to keep your child in the program?
20. How, if at all, do you think being a Kaiapuni student affects your child's future?
21. What kinds of educational activities do you do with your kids, both related and not related to school? (language-related activities?)
22. From the very beginning of the Kaiapuni program, the policy has been to introduce English in Grade 5 for one hour and to continue this through high school. What do you think about this policy?
23. Has this program influenced you personally? If so, how? Has this program influenced your family? If so, how?
24. (If the child is Hawaiian…) Do you think this program has influenced the way your child sees him/herself as Hawaiian? Has it influenced how others in the family see themselves?
25. (For Hawaiian participants) What do you think about non-Hawaiians participating in the program (students and educators)?
26. (If the child is not Hawaiian) What is it like to be a non-Hawaiian in this program? What has it been like for your child?

27. Do you think families influence the program? In what ways? Can you think an example of how your family or another has influenced the program?
28. In what ways, if any, do you think the program influences the larger community? (People not necessarily involved in Kaiapuni)?
29. What kinds of questions or responses have other people made to you about having your child in the Kaiapuni program? What is your response? (extended family, other community support)
30. What advice do you have for families thinking of enrolling their children in the Kaiapuni program?
31. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about what we have been talking about?
32. Are there other parents that you recommend that we talk to about these issues?

Constructing Families, Constructing Literacy: A Critical Analysis of Family Literacy Websites

Jim Anderson, Kimberly Lenters, and Marianne McTavish

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to critically examine how family literacy is promoted and represented on websites developed by family literacy program providers. Naturalistic research over the last 20 years or so demonstrates that the family is a rich site for supporting children's literacy development across socioeconomic and cultural contexts. That research suggests that families engage children in a wide array of literacy activities in their daily lives. Furthermore, significant others, in addition to parents, play important roles in children's literacy development. In this study, we examined a representative sample of family literacy websites from across Canada. Findings suggest that: family literacy programs tend to focus almost exclusively on young children, families are portrayed narrowly, deficit notions of families are still prevalent, and the promises made about the impact of family literacy programs go far beyond what the limited research evidence available suggests.

Key Words: family literacy programs, literacy development, critical literacy, parents, children, siblings, early childhood, deficit theory, storybook reading, writing, websites, families, communities, Canada, Internet, first teacher

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze how families and literacy are represented (or portrayed) in the texts on websites that advertise and promote

family literacy programs in Canada. Given the promotion of family literacy programs in most western countries and the increasing availability of and accessibility to the Internet, we believe it is timely and important to investigate what information about families and about literacy is being conveyed through this medium. The following questions guided the study:

1) What messages about families are conveyed in the texts on family literacy websites?
2) What messages about literacy are being conveyed?
3) What promises about literacy are implied or explicitly stated?

Perspectives and Background

Interest in the family as a site for literacy development can be traced to Denny Taylor's classic book, *Family Literacy* (1983). Using ethnographic techniques, she documented daily literacy events of young children in six middle-class families. She found that children participated in an array of literacy activities and events at home and in the community as families went about their daily lives. Taylor concluded that there was very little evidence of children being formally taught literacy skills; rather, parents immersed their children in daily literacy events through which children were acculturated into literacy. More recently, Lenters (2007) reached similar conclusions in her study that examined how a middle-class boy appropriates the literacy practices that are a part of daily family and community life.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) followed Taylor's first study by working with a group of families living in an economically depressed and dangerous inner city area. They found that despite incredible challenges, the families regularly engaged the children in reading and writing and had a very high regard for literacy and for education. Researchers such as Anderson and Stokes (1984), Reyes (1992), and McTavish (2007) reached similar conclusions based on their work with families considered at risk.

Gregory (2001) challenged the conventional assumption that family literacy mainly involves parents engaging in literacy with their children. Based on her work with Bangladeshi Anglo families in a socially and economically disadvantaged area of London, Gregory (2001) documented the ways in which siblings supported each other's language and literacy learning at home through their play routines. Her work is especially significant in that it demonstrates how children can support each others' learning to read and write in a second or additional language. She describes this support "as a synergy, a unique reciprocity whereby siblings act as adjuvants in each other's learning…" (p. 309). Gregory and her colleagues have extended their work to document the roles

that grandparents and other family members play in supporting children's language and literacy development (Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004).

A dominant perspective in the educational and research literature is that young children's literacy learning is contingent upon active support from a parent or significant other. A classic study by Tizzard, Schofield, and Hewison (1982) in an economically depressed area of London challenged that assumption. Assigning intact classes to one of three conditions, they compared the effects of having: (1) one group of children read to their parents or a significant other; (2) a second group receive remedial tutoring in reading from a trained teacher at school; and (3) and a third group of children receive no assistance outside of regular classroom instruction. Results showed that the children who read each day to a parent (or significant other) made significant gains, whereas the children in the remedial reading program and those in the control group did not. The study demonstrated that parents and other family members can play important roles simply by *listening* to young children's reading.

Thus, most educators and researchers now recognize that the family can play an important role in children's early literacy development. In particular, researchers have documented that parents and other caregivers support children's literacy by: encouraging them to "write" notes, messages, lists, and so forth (Taylor, 1983); reading print in the home and community such as signs, books, advertisements, religious materials, notes, grocery lists, and logos (Purcell-Gates, 1996); encouraging language development through discussion, and through riddles, rhymes, raps, and songs (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001); teaching, in developmentally appropriate ways, the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002); supporting their young children's responses to popular culture texts (Lenters, 2007); and providing role models as readers and writers (Anderson, 1995). As well, young children use a range of symbols to construct and represent meaning (Kress, 1997; Marsh, 2006). Furthermore, siblings and extended family members support each other's literacy development, especially when the parents are unable to provide support (e.g., Gregory, 2005).

Whereas studies such as those just cited tended to be naturalistic documentations of family literacy practices, Purcell-Gates (2000) pointed out that the term *family literacy* has come to be associated with *family literacy programs*, oriented toward enhancing young children's literacy development. Critics maintain such programs are based on deficit notions of family (Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001) and promote "school literacy" while ignoring or devaluing literacy practices that families engage in at home and in the community (Auerbach, 1995). Furthermore, Hendrix (1999) argued that family literacy programs are oversold in that there is a lack of empirical evidence that they contribute

significantly to young children's literacy development. So despite the proliferation of family literacy programs, important questions have been raised about their orientation, intent, and efficacy.

The present study is framed within several theoretical perspectives. Our work is informed by literacy as social practices paradigm (e.g., Heath, 1983; Street, 1995). From this perspective, literacy is viewed not simply as an amalgam of cognitive and linguistic skills transferable from one context to another, but also as complex social practices that vary contextually. The research is also informed by the foundational work of Vygotsky (1987) and other sociocultural learning theorists (e.g., Wertsch, 1985). From within this framework and in the context of family literacy, parents and significant others (including extended family members) lend the necessary support in learning a literacy skill or concept but "hand-off" the task to the children when they are capable of completing it independently (Rogoff, 1990).

Emerging conceptions of multiple literacies (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) also guide this work. From within this perspective, literacy is seen as extending beyond encoding and decoding print – notions that have been the foci of literacy in the past – and includes various forms of constructing and representing meaning. Finally, we are mindful of important work in critical literacy (e.g., Baker & Luke, 1991). That is, while we acknowledge that literacy can be transformative and liberating (Freire, 1997), it can also serve hegemonic roles in perpetuating inequity in terms of gender, social class, and so forth.

The current study extends previous research (Anderson, Streelasky, & Anderson, 2007; Kendrick, Anderson, Smythe, & Mackay, 2003) that examined how families and literacy are portrayed on websites. Kendrick et al. compared how five- and six-year-olds represented literacy through their drawings with the ways in which literacy was represented in images on family literacy websites. The children's drawings represented a wide variety of literacy practices (i.e., writing, reading, using computers, singing, etc.) involving different family members in different contexts (i.e., at church, at the playground, at home, in a parents' office, etc.). However, the dominant image on the websites was that of a woman (mother) reading to a young child; when other people were included, a traditional nuclear family configuration dominated. Book reading was the predominant literacy activity or event, while writing, oral language and other forms of literacy were noticeably absent. In nearly all cases, the literacy events were depicted as occurring at home or in more formal contexts such as day care centers or libraries.

In a follow-up study, Anderson et al. (2007) expanded the number of websites that were examined, insuring greater representation of the various geographical and cultural regions of Canada. Again, an adult (Caucasian, woman)

reading to a child was the dominant image. As well, book reading dominated, and there were few examples of writing, of people using technology, or of reading other forms of texts. Likewise, literacy was depicted as occurring at home or in more formal settings.

In the two previous studies, the *images* were analyzed as to the messages conveyed; in this paper, we focus on the *texts* on the web pages, although we occasionally allude to the images.

Method

To select the websites for this study, we searched the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD; http://www.nald.ca/) for all websites containing the term "family literacy." That search yielded a corpus of 48 websites, representing fairly equally the 10 provinces and three territories of Canada. NALD describes itself as a "federally incorporated, non-profit service organization which fills the crucial need for a single-source, comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible database of adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities across Canada" (NALD, 2002). Because many family literacy programs (ostensibly) have an adult literacy component, they are included in that database. As each family literacy website was identified, we downloaded the text and saved it as an RTF file. We then individually read all of the files and began to identify common threads and themes in response to each of the research questions. Next, we met and collectively compiled a list of key words for each theme. For example, we grouped terms such as *grandparents, grandmother, aunts and uncles, siblings, brother, sister* under the theme *extended family.* We then employed the Atlas-ti Visual Qualitative Data Analysis software to identify all instances of each theme on the websites and the frequency with which it occurred. Finally, we grouped the various themes into five clusters that we labelled: Forms of Literacy; Family Type; Literacy Messages; Family Messages; and Promises/Consequences of Literacy, as shown in the tables.

Results

Messages About Families

The first question that guided this study was "What messages about families are conveyed on family literacy websites?" In terms of the five clusters of themes referred to earlier and provided in the tables we first discuss Family Type.

Table 1. Family Types, n = 48

Themes	Frequency
Parents and children	30
Extended family (e.g., grandparents, siblings)	7
Specific (e.g., mom, dad)	10
Alternate family (e.g., single parent)	16
Deficit families (e.g., at risk families, teenage parents)	11

Family Type

As might be expected, the terms "parents and children" were found frequently, as shown in Table 1. Some programs alluded to the intergenerational notion of literacy development, but there were relatively few specific instances of the importance of extended family members (Gregory et al., 2004). Five sites named siblings and two sites named grandparents, an underrepresentation of the roles that extended family members play in supporting literacy, we believe. There were seven examples where mothers or women were identified and three for fathers or men. Mace (1998) and others contended that family literacy programs reflect gendered notions of parenting in that mothers are assumed to bear responsibility for children's early literacy development. And while the texts tended not to reflect this perspective, it should be remembered that we earlier found that a woman reading to a young child was by far the most pervasive image on these websites (Anderson et al., 2007). Attempts at expanded understandings or definitions of families were evident on several sites. Examples included the importance of recognizing "all types of families" and of construing families as "two or more people related by blood, marriages, adoption or commitment to one another." Interestingly, about one-third of the sites included the term "caregiver(s)," usually presented as "parents and caregivers" or "parents/caregivers," and we interpreted this as an attempt to recognize significant other adults. We found 11 websites that presented deficit notions such as "families most in need," "teenage parents," or "parents with low literacy skills." Given the criticism that many family literacy programs are incorrectly based on deficit notions of family, this finding was somewhat surprising. For example, Auerbach (1995) argued that while many family literacy programs proclaim that they build on family strengths, deficit assumptions undergird them. Noticeably absent in the texts we examined was mention of adolescents or youth (as members of the family), especially given the current interest in adolescents and literacy (e.g., Cassidy & Cassidy, 2007).

To summarize, "parents and children" were most frequently named in reference to family literacy programs. There was limited acknowledgement of the role of extended family members and of family configurations beyond the traditional nuclear family. And finally, some family literacy programs named families perceived as deficit as the targeted audience.

Table 2. Family Messages, n = 48

Themes	Frequency
Parenting (e.g., some families need to be taught, how to value literacy, how to teach literacy, how to parent)	31
Confidence (e.g., in ability to parent, to help child at home, higher levels of literacy)	19
First teacher (e.g., parents have the responsibility to prepare child for life)	16
Quality of life (e.g., quality of family life is connected to literacy)	13
School achievement (e.g., child's school achievement is connected to parent's literacy level)	13

Family Messages

We turn next to the themes that we clustered under Family Messages. Despite evidence that across sociocultural groups families tend to value and engage their children in literacy activities (e.g., Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1998), many of the sites we examined suggested that parents need to be taught to value and promote literacy (see Table 2). For example, the aim of one program was to have "Parents learn about their role in helping their children become readers and writers," while another proclaimed, "Family Literacy programs help parents become their child's first and most important teacher." That such shibboleths refer to particular "at risk" groups is more implied than explicit, for as was stated earlier, relatively few (11) of the 48 websites that were examined named these groups. Closely related to this theme was the notion of helping parents develop confidence in their parenting skills and in their role as literacy providers, the assumption being that "at risk" families lack confidence. Statements such as the following were fairly common: "Parents gain skills and confidence which can enable them to create positive family patterns during their children's crucial early years."

Another theme we found was that of the parent being the child's first (and most important) teacher. This message or some slightly different version of it occurred on approximately one third of the sites. Sometimes, the same message was more subtly presented, as in the following statement, "The family, however defined, is at the centre of this learning and the primary vehicle for transporting the child through the early years of life and into the future." This perspective is also promoted in some of the mainstream family literacy literature; for example, Morrow (1995) proclaimed, "Parents are the first teachers their children have, and they are the teachers that children have for the longest time" (p. 6). However, Smythe (2006) took issue with this notion, which she acknowledged has become a hallmark of the family literacy movement. She argued that this notion leads to the inequities that family literacy programs attempt to ameliorate, in that while some parents have the social capital, material

resources, time, and language and literacy skills necessary to perform this role, many parents do not.

Another fairly consistent message we found was that family literacy programs can enhance the quality of life for participants. In some instances, the claims were explicit such as, "Family literacy programs also encourage and create a positive attitude toward lifelong learning within the entire family," and "Reading together provides opportunities for positive interaction and opens the door to discussion and communication." In other cases, the message was much more subtle. Interestingly, in their highly regarded metaanalysis of the effects of storybook reading with young children, Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) concluded that in some families the opposite was true, and indeed storybook reading was a source of tension and conflict. They elaborated upon the "broccoli effect in reading" wherein parents forced their young children into shared book reading even when they resisted it strongly, just as they forced their children to eat broccoli, even if the child resisted, in the belief that "it is good for you!"

Although there is some evidence that family literacy programs can positively impact young children's language (e.g., St. Clair & Jackson, 2006) and literacy development (e.g., Brooks, Gorman, Harman, Hutchison, & Wilkin, 1996), one of the issues identified in the literature has been the lack of empirical evidence as to their long-term effect (Phillips & Sample, 2005). A fundamental assumption of many family literacy programs, however, is that they improve achievement in school. This premise was implicit in most of the sites we examined and explicit in others. For example, one program suggested, "Supported by easy-to-use activity packets, bi-weekly home visits, and group meetings, HIPPY parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school and beyond." The lack of longitudinal evidence notwithstanding, another proclaimed "Family literacy can have a big effect on how well children do in school."

Auerbach (1995) asserted that while many programs claim to be based on the notion of building on family strengths, many pay only lip service to what families bring to the programs and actually reflect a deficit orientation. Approximately one quarter of the programs we examined stated what appears to be genuine concern for recognizing and building on the literacy practices of families and communities. And consistent with what Auerbach explained, some programs stated that they build on family strengths, and in literally the same sentence identified the people with whom they work in deficit terms such as "at risk."[1]

In summation, inherent in many of the texts was the notion that parents need to be taught how to value and to engage in literacy, while simultaneously, and somewhat ironically, the notion that parents are the child's first and most

important teacher was promoted. Some sites identify "at risk" families and suggest that such families lack confidence. Many family literacy programs implied that they will enhance school success and the quality of family life, even though there is a relative dearth of empirical evidence to support these claims. Finally, some programs were based on the philosophy of building on family strengths and building capacity based on the needs and aspirations identified by families and communities.

Messages About Literacy

The second research question asked, "What messages about literacy are being conveyed in the texts on family literacy websites?" We first report on the themes clustered under Forms of Literacy.

Table 3. Forms of Literacy, *n* = 48

Themes	Frequency
Genre (e.g., stories, rhymes, songs)	24
Skills (e.g., acquisition of school-like reading behaviors such as alphabet recognition, phonemic awareness, decoding, numeracy)	15
Strands (e.g., speaking, reading, writing, viewing, representing)	38

Forms of Literacy

Given the importance afforded to narrative in working with young children, it is perhaps not surprising that "story" was pervasive when we examined genres named on the websites. Likewise, many sites also identified "rhymes" and "songs." Although spread more sporadically across the texts examined, a fairly wide array of genres were evident, including: newspapers, shopping lists, letters, board games, cookbooks, recipes, passports, journals, and so forth.

Many of the sites mentioned "literacy skills," and to a lesser extent, "numeracy" or number skills. However, as is evident in Table 3, relatively few identified specific skills including letter and number recognition, phonics, phonological awareness, and spelling. Although most of the programs emphasized working with preschool programs, it was noteworthy that only two identified "literacy concepts" as a goal for young children. Researchers in early literacy (e.g., Purcell-Gates, 1996) emphasize the importance of young children's acquiring fundamental concepts (e.g., that print carries meaning) in order to make sense of instruction in symbol-sound relationships and so on upon entry to school. Likewise, although many programs promoted rhyme and story, phonological (or phonemic) awareness was mentioned on only one website.

Despite protestations that "family literacy is not just about reading and writing," found on a number of sites, reading was the most frequent form or

strand of literacy identified. Writing was also found quite frequently. Some programs promoted a more eclectic notion of literacy and included singing, surfing the Internet, drama, crafts, art, and mathematics. So although theorists such as Kress (1997) posit that young children's meaning making is multimodal, reading and writing predominated here.

In terms of the types of literacy, then, story (or narrative) was the most prominent genre found on these sites. Although literacy skills were frequently mentioned, these were generally not identified. Reading and writing were the literacy strands most frequently named, although many programs proclaimed that family literacy entails more than reading and writing. The second cluster of themes we examined in order to answer the second research question we called Literacy Messages.

Table 4. Literacy Messages, n = 48

Themes	Frequency
Promotion (e.g., literacy needs to be promoted)	27
Relationships (e.g., literacy builds positive relationships)	17
Simplified (e.g., literacy is fun and/or pleasurable and/or easy)	17
Functionality (e.g., literacy is necessary to get things done; low literacy impairs ones ability to function in society)	12
Empowerment (e.g., literacy leads to empowerment; low literacy leads to shame and embarrassment)	22
Lifelong learning (e.g., literacy is connected to lifelong learning)	23
Early literacy (e.g., literacy must be developed early with parents providing role models and reading frequently to their children)	39

Literacy Messages

As is evident in Table 4, a fairly frequent message was that literacy needs to be promoted. Interestingly, many of those who avail themselves of family literacy programs, especially in Canada, do so because they believe that literacy is important for them and their children (e.g., see Phillips & Sample, 2005). This appears to be a case of "preaching to the choir," to use a colloquialism.

The notion that literacy (and especially reading) builds positive relationships within families was fairly common. For example, the goal of one program was to "promote reading and learning as valued family activities that encourage positive interactions and shared experiences." However, as Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) pointed out, shared reading can be a source of incredible tension within families as well-intentioned adults try to engage children who do not enjoy listening to others read. Related to this idea, we believe, is the notion that literacy (and again, particularly reading) is "fun." Recognizing that many adults and children struggle with acquiring literacy, we see this as a rather

simplified view of reading. About one third of the programs promoted this notion, as was the case with one program which stated that one of its objectives was to "promote reading as fun, pleasurable and entertaining." Ironically, some of these same programs indicated that they aim to support parents who have struggled with literacy.

Also prominent on the sites we examined were messages warning of the dire consequences of low literacy skills. Implicit (and sometimes explicit) was the idea that people who have not attained certain literacy levels are unable to function adequately in society. For example, one site stated, "The International Adult Literacy Survey (1995) concluded that approximately 44 percent of adults in British Columbia have difficulty reading and writing on a daily functional basis." Responding to similar hyperbole about the IALS contained in a newspaper editorial, Purcell-Gates (2005) commented, "In fact, the results indicate that virtually all Canadian adults do have the skills for everyday reading, depending on one's 'every-day' needs, of course." She continued, "Common sense can be a great help here. Do we really believe that almost half of the people we see over the course of a week can't read or write?" Furthermore, as we have consistently pointed out, there is very little evidence that family literacy programs are able to "break the cycle" of illiteracy, as some websites purported.

Given the negativity with which people with low literacy ability are sometimes portrayed, it is perhaps not surprising that literacy was portrayed as "empowering" on many family literacy websites. Typical were statements that literacy "enhances ones ability to participate more fully," "allows one to achieve one's goals," "enables one to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential," and of course, "is empowering." As would be expected, we also found statements that programs empower participants, such as, "family literacy empowers people." As we read these texts, we were struck that accompanying this discourse about empowerment was a parallel discourse about "at risk," "needy," and "low-literacy" families. We wondered whether there is a subtext here that suggests that if these families would engage in the right kind of literacy practices, in the right amounts, and at the right time, all would be well.

A number of programs stated that one of their goals is to promote lifelong learning. Indeed, some programs made claims such as, "Family literacy programs also encourage and create a positive attitude toward lifelong learning within the entire family." As we pointed out before, the long terms effects of family literacy programs are generally unknown. Furthermore, as Mace (1997) argued, family literacy programs tend to ignore the learning and literacy needs of adults. As was reported earlier, we found virtually no mention of the needs of older children or adolescents. Instead, most programs focus on early literacy, the theme that we examine next.

Early literacy was the focus of virtually all of the sites we looked at in this study. Many of the programs identified preparing children for school or "readiness" as a primary goal. Some programs claimed to be based on "brain research" that emphasizes the importance of children having rich language and literacy experiences in the early years, suggesting that "the brain operates on a use it or lose it principle." Although some programs mentioned the importance of oral language and suggested talking with and listening to children, telling stories, singing songs, and reciting rhymes, reading books was by far the favored and most heavily promoted literacy activity. Luke and Luke (2001) proposed that family literacy and early literacy programs reflect the "inoculation principle" and are based on the assumption that early and intense intervention prevents later literacy (and, therefore, larger societal) problems. Indeed, this view is stated unequivocally on the *Read to Me!* website.

> Encouraging early childhood literacy could turn out to be our most potent "immunizing" agent. It confers a high degree of lifetime immunity against poverty, educational failure, low self-esteem and poor health. Can you think of any vaccine that offers such a high level of lasting protection against so many serious human afflictions? (Richard Goldbloom, OC MD FRCPC, Honourary Chair of the *Read to Me!* program, cited on the IWK Health Centre Website)

To summarize the literacy messages, some programs claimed that literacy enhances relationships, especially within families. Programs tended to portray literacy (and reading especially) as fun. The impression that people with low literacy abilities are not able to function was implied on many websites and explicit on others. Related to this, literacy was often referred to as empowering. The concept of lifelong learning was promoted, although ironically few programs addressed the needs of older children, youth and adolescents, or adults.

Promises/Consequences of Literacy

The third question was, "What promises about literacy are implied or explicitly stated on family literacy program websites?"

As discussed earlier, nearly all of the family programs whose websites we examined focused on early literacy. Inherent in most of the texts was the notion that the programs will give children a head start in literacy development and help them to be ready for school. However, some programs claimed long term effects, such as "Family literacy can have a big effect on how well children do in school." Others indicated that the impact was more far reaching, claiming that reading to children has a "positive impact on their future academic skills," including "performing mathematical tasks." It is important to reiterate that

while there are indications that family literacy programs do make a difference in young children's literacy development (e.g., Brooks et al., 1996; St. Clair & Jackson, 2006), there is a dearth of research that examines their long term impact on children's academic progress.

Table 5. Promises/Consequences of Literacy, *n* = 48

Themes	Frequency
Academic (e.g., children will do better in school because of family literacy programs)	29
Financial (e.g., literacy is linked to financial success)	27
Personal/political (e.g., literacy allows one to participate fully in society)	25
Societal (e.g., family literacy will cure a number of societal ills)	30

As evidenced in the earlier quotation from the *Read to Me!* program, literacy was often promoted as the great equalizer in terms of distribution of financial resources. For example, one program stated, "Literacy is a pre-condition for getting access to the market, the pre-condition for getting economic independence." The logic behind many family literacy programs seemed to be that poor families are low-literate families, and by breaking the "cycle of illiteracy" through family literacy programming, the children will become literate and will be financially more successful. An anonymous respondent to a presentation at a recent national literacy conference bluntly expressed this position in a comment stating that the family literacy program just reported on had helped the families "pull themselves up by the bootstraps." However, in his classic historical analysis, Graff (1979) concluded that literacy does not level the playing field in terms of economic opportunity. Furthermore, as Brandt's historical analysis demonstrated, literacy demands change largely as a result of economic forces that shape the marketplace. As she elaborated,

> we have paid less attention to the effects of these economic changes on the status of literacy more broadly as it becomes integral to economic relations, and as it is pulled deeply into the engines of productivity and profit. What happens when literacy itself is capitalized as a productive force? And what impact does such investment have on the course of individual literacy learning? (Brandt, 2001, p. 171)

We wonder if family literacy program providers consider the shifting nature of literacy and the demands that families will encounter in these new times (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996).

Many of the programs promoted the idea that literacy is necessary in order for one to participate fully in society. For example, one site proclaimed that

literacy is "the pre-condition for being a full human being capable of making plans, executing them, and standing up for yourself when you get pushed around." Another asserted that "literacy is a universal human right which can give individuals the tools to more fully participate in the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizenship." As discussed earlier, the term *empowerment* was frequently employed with the implication that literacy leads to empowerment and that disenfranchised families will empower themselves and their children through their participation in family literacy programs. But as Purcell-Gates (1996) pointed out, some of the low-literate families in her study led productive, fulfilled lives, using literacy only minimally on a daily basis.

Claims about the potential of family literacy extend beyond the family; indeed, one can be left with the impression after reading these texts that family literacy is the solution to many of society's ills. The statement reported earlier from the *Read to me!* program, while perhaps an example of hyperbole in terms of claims about literacy, is a case in point. Many of the programs suggested that they strengthen communities, and they then forecast a better future.

To summarize, the explicit and implicit message in the texts we analyzed was that literacy is a panacea for many social and economic problems in our society. Furthermore, the family was portrayed as the site where these solutions originate. As Smythe (2006) and others have pointed out, many of the people for whom these programs say they are intended struggle at the margins of society, and the expectations generated by this discourse are onerous and, perhaps, quite unrealistic.

We, the three authors, have considerable experience working in family literacy programs and, indeed, are still heavily involved in several initiatives. Many of the parents and communities with whom we have worked have told us that they and their children have benefited from their participation (e.g., Anderson & Morrison, 2007). As practitioners, though, we were surprised at some of the claims being made on websites, for as we see it, the evidence is not yet in with regard to the long-term impact of family literacy programs. Like Auerbach (2005), we believe there is a need to temper considerably the claims we make about the power of family literacy programs. As she poignantly stated: "humility about what we can and cannot do is the key" (p. 378).

Concluding Thoughts

As we read and carefully examined the websites' texts, we were struck by the remarkable consistency among them. Canada represents a large geographical area with a population that is culturally and linguistically diverse. Although there are some minor variations, if we were to distill the messages in these texts,

it would be that family literacy is about parents reading books to young children to insure school readiness, which insures academic success and a healthy, productive, engaged life, which in turn leads to a more civil society.

It was beyond the scope of the present study to interview family literacy program providers to determine how they decide what messages to include online. A worthwhile follow-up study would be to trace the lineage of the ideas presented on these websites and to interview family literacy program providers as to how and why they decide to include and, therefore, promote the ideas and messages that they do. For example, who is the intended audience, what are the sources of the ideas and information that are presented, and what impact is anticipated or intended? Indeed, for what purposes has the website been constructed and posted?

It was also beyond the scope of this study to examine issues of readership. For example, we did not examine the volume of hits for the various websites because many of the sites did not have counters. Furthermore, we do not know who is actually reading and consulting these sites. Another valuable follow-up study would be to address these issues, and to ascertain if and how those who participate in family literacy programs access, perceive, and respond to the messages on these websites.

Some of the programs indicated that they are “evidence based” or that they reflect the latest research. However, seldom is any of the research cited or the source of the empirical evidence provided. Nearly all of the programs acknowledged that family literacy programs need to reflect the social contextual realities of the communities and families that the programs are intended to serve. However, the homogeneity across the sites suggests that this is not the case.

The Internet is increasingly becoming accessible to all segments of society. For example, survey data from 2005 revealed that 67.9% of Canadians accessed the Internet daily (Statistics Canada, 2005). Thus it is important that the messages we provide to families and family literacy program providers accurately reflect what we know about the many ways in which children’s literacy can be supported within the context of the family and community. Families need to be conceptualized broadly and inclusively to reflect the reality of an increasingly global and diverse society. It is also important that texts and images convey congruent messages: this clearly appears not to be the case at present. And, finally, it is imperative that we have realistic perspectives of what family literacy programs can and cannot do.

Endnote

[1]We see such language ("at risk," single parents, and the like) as reflecting an essentialist perspective; as we see it families are complex phenomena and assuming that membership in a group somehow describes what families do, think, value, and so forth is faulty. Second, as Shirley Brice Heath and others remind us, there are often more differences within sociocultural groups than there are across them. Third, we have worked with parents who belong to some of the identified groups who provide their children with incredibly rich language, literacy, and learning experiences. Stacey Cody, a single parent in one of our programs is a case in point. Her story, published in *Portraits of Literacy Across Families, Communities and Schools: Intersections and Tensions* (Anderson, Kendrick, Rogers, & Smythe, 2005; also available at http://www.lerc.educ.ubc.ca/fac/anderson/pals/Cody.pdf), details this point. Finally, many of the middle class parents with whom we work (who are, supposedly, already doing the right kinds of literacy, in the correct way, in the proper amounts, at the right times) tell us they benefit enormously from participating in family literacy programs.

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Promising Website Practices for Disseminating Research on Family-School Partnerships to the Community

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Abstract

The issue of research dissemination via websites is part of the larger research utilization question, and the authors begin with a review of literature on the theory and best practices in dissemination. The second part of the study involves an exploratory examination of the websites and dissemination practices of 30 research centers focusing on the field of family-school partnership issues. Using the literature review as a guide to look at the websites, the researchers rate each website and compile a listing of promising practices. Although the results are exploratory, they do pose important questions about audience and about including all stakeholders in the research-dissemination process. The results also provide some practical suggestions about websites for both researchers and for family-school partnership programs.

Key Words: family-school partnerships, dissemination, research, websites

Introduction

There is a question that researchers in the field of family-school partnerships do not like to discuss: Does the community ever find out about their research? Researchers spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours getting doctoral degrees, applying for research grants, conducting research, giving presentations to colleagues, writing journal articles, and publishing books, but

does any of this research ever reach the intended audience – family-school partnership practitioners? How is family-school partnership research disseminated to the community? Is the community hearing about any of the research findings? Will the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement to use more evidence-based practices entice family-school partnership practitioners to want to hear about research? Do family-school partnerships care about research findings? What are best practices for getting research on family-school partnerships to the public?

Examining the question of the dissemination of family-school partnership research is a complex issue that is part of the much larger issue of research utilization. These researchers explored one small part of the larger, multi-faceted research utilization question – the issue of research dissemination strategies in family-school partnership websites. This purposive study had two parts – a review of the literature on the theory and best practices in dissemination and an exploratory examination of the websites of 30 research centers – focusing on the field of family-school partnership issues and dissemination practices.

The purpose of the literature review was to develop a foundation about current theories and practice recommendations. The plan was to use these recommendations as a "yardstick" to look at the dissemination practices of websites in the field of family-school partnerships. The researchers wanted to know if the websites of these research centers are employing strategies that help family members, school personnel, and community members to find out about and ultimately use the latest research. This question is also important for the practice community who increasingly head to websites as a first strategy when looking for empirical studies to support their requests for new family-school partnership programs or who want to find an evidence-based program or practice to implement according to NCLB requirements. Family-school partnership programs also have a vested interest in the topic (dissemination and websites) since they use websites to disseminate program activities and content to community and school partners.

Many recent authors (e.g., Bachrach et al.,1998; Dzewaltowski et al., 2004; Smart, 2005; Woolis & Restler, 2003) see the Internet as a low-cost, easily available dissemination channel, and most research centers maintain an active website. Even though not all organizations allow their staff to have access to the Internet and not all have the same amount of information technology, the Internet is one of the most widely used forms of research dissemination, and its use in the dissemination process is growing.

In the examination of the family-school partnership websites, the researchers were assessing whether the centers were using Havelock's 1969 model, which described research utilization as a one-way, linear process of research–

development–dissemination–evaluation, or if they were using Hutchinson and Huberman's 1993 model, which re-characterized research utilization as an active learning process whereby the knowledge is mediated in the practice arena and the user acts on the knowledge being presented and imposes meaning and organization on the disseminated information. The goal of the literature review and exploratory examination of websites was to develop a set of preliminary questions for future research, build stronger bridges between research and community, and provide some practical suggestions for both researchers and for family-school partnership programs.

Background

Most studies of the research utilization process (e.g., Weiss, 1988; Chavkin, 1993) lament the huge gap between research and practice utilization. Early theories about research utilization (Havelock, 1969) saw the user as a receiver with a "blank slate," "sponge," or "empty bucket" that would receive the information from research articles and use the findings of the research studies exactly as they were received. Rogers (1988) calls this the traditional agricultural extension model where the primary focus is on spreading the word.

Later, with the era of advanced technology, these theories were modified to see the user comparable to a computer that processes and filters information in an orderly manner and then uses the sorted information at the appropriate times. Shapiro (1994) suggests that even though these rather simplistic models of distributing the information, sorting the information, and then using the information are now held in low regard when discussing theories about dissemination and research utilization, the models are still widely observed and may be the most predominant practice models in existence and lend credence to the general complaint that there is a missing link in the dissemination of research to the public.

Using constructivist learning theory, Hutchinson and Huberman (1993) changed our understanding of theories of dissemination and research utilization. Their work altered the view of knowledge as an inert object to the view of knowledge as a fluid process of understandings that was shaped by both the developers and the users. The user was not just the receiver of knowledge but also was an active constructor. This model was a radical departure from earlier conceptions of dissemination and research utilization; it suggested that new knowledge was actually being formed as users were shaping and adapting the knowledge that they were receiving.

The new utilization model also suggests that users are most likely to use and adapt the research when they perceive that they have a need for the information.

Marketers have particularly embraced this theory by focusing on users' perceptions of need; thus marketers work hard to convince us that we "need" to use the latest product. Herie and Martin (2002) suggest that social marketing theory has strong relevance to knowledge diffusion in translating research findings to the community, and they give examples of the effective dissemination of research-based addiction treatment modalities to direct practice clinicians. Their work is in line with the idea that social marketing provides the framework for practice innovation (Fine & Fine, 1986; Kledaras, 1985; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Thus, the issue of dissemination moves to the forefront of the research utilization cycle.

Zervigon-Hakes (1995) analyzes the many problems of translating research findings by examining the roles, communication styles, communication media, range of research interests, and timing of researchers and then comparing those characteristics with the roles, communication styles, communication media, range of research interests, and timing of elected public officials, appointed policymakers, and career policymakers. She aptly points out that researchers and policymakers operate very differently. For example, researchers tend to publish in technical journals, technical books, and governmental program reports, but policymakers tend to get their information from newspapers, televisions, and issue briefs. In addition to the major differences in communication media, there were also differences in style, range of research interests, and timing. Researchers used technical language, and public officials and policymakers were more people-oriented and worked to communicate with a variety of literacy levels. Public officials had broad ranges of interest and wanted quick responses; researchers worked in more discipline-specific modes and needed time to conduct quality research.

Barratt (1998) concurs with Zervigon-Hakes (1995) about the lack of communication between researchers and practitioners. She reports that researchers do not always make results understandable to practitioners, and practitioners are not often exposed to research. Even when research does reach practitioners, the research might not work in the new setting because of oversimplification during the dissemination process or implementation issues. The difference in values and attitudes between researchers and practitioners is a big stumbling block to the utilization of research. Barratt's study gathered information from staff of child welfare agencies on putting research in practice. The results showed that everyone involved agreed that research results should be put into a clear format for practitioners to understand, and agencies should have access to evidence-based research in libraries within the agency. Managers agreed that staff need time in the agency to read research and understand it in order to use more evidence-based practices in their own practice; however, they noted

that there is not sufficient time for this due to the lack of staff. Barratt also recommends using teams in agencies as a way to better utilize evidence-based practice. The idea is that teams would generate more discussion of research ideas since more than one person would have the research findings, and then the team discussions might lead to more effective application of research.

Involving practitioners in all stages of research, including hypothesis conception, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination is an age-old idea but not one that is frequently practiced. Hargreaves (1999) and Finifter and colleagues (2005) suggest that dissemination is most effective when researchers and practitioners are working together from start to finish. The more communication between the two parties, the more successful the future transactions are between them. Many times it is the researchers who have problems with disseminating information because they do not understand the context of the data they have collected. If the data are from schools, researchers need teachers to help translate it into practice. The authors suggest that universities should work together with teachers and practitioners at all stages in creating, validating, and disseminating research.

Echoing the same sentiment, Reback and her colleagues (2002) also call for practice/research partnerships in all stages of the research-dissemination-utilization process. They stress the importance of equal partnerships with bilateral communication and nonhierarchical collaboration. Bogenschneider and colleagues (2000) connect research and policymaking through the use of Family Impact Seminars in Wisconsin, and they identify pragmatic practices that again focus on partnerships for strengthening the dissemination process. Some of their recommendations that would apply to any dissemination process include: developing varied delivery mechanisms geared to diverse learning styles; linking academic, agency, and legislative partners; taking advantage of timing; and targeting the information needs and work culture of the user.

Kirst (2000) looks at dissemination from a different perspective and identifies five key factors that affect the success of dissemination efforts. These include the source of communication, the dissemination channel, the format of communication, the message, and the characteristics of the recipient. He stresses, however, that none of these factors can be successful if the original research analysis is of low quality.

Methodology for Examining the Websites

The researchers used a purposive sample of 30 research centers/institutes focusing on the field of family-school partnerships and conducted an analysis of the websites belonging to these programs. The websites in the sample are in the

public domain. All of the material from the websites was printed and cataloged in file folders during a three-month time period.

After a pilot test with two websites from a different educational content area, the questions and ratings were refined, and the two researchers checked their ratings for inter-rater reliability. The same two researchers rated all of the websites. In order to check for and limit bias, the researchers also cross-checked the ratings on a sub-sample of the actual study with three other researchers. No major differences were found.

Adapting the earlier work of the National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research (Westbrook & Boethel, 1996, 1997) to look at research utilization in the field of family-school partnerships, the researchers looked at five key elements for each website: auspices, content, medium, targeted user, and context. Table 1 shows the elements and the related issues in effective dissemination.

Table 1. Elements of Dissemination and Their Relationship to Issues in Effective Dissemination

Screen	Key Elements of Dissemination	Examples of Issues in Effective Dissemination
1	Auspices – university, agency, foundation, private organization, governmental entity	Competence Credibility Experience Skills
2	Content – research area or focus	Methodology Outcomes Comprehensiveness Utility Cost effectiveness
3	Medium(s) – website, newsletter, publications, trainings, listservs	Physical capacity Timeliness Accessibility Clarity
4	Targeted User	Perceived relevance Readiness to change Capacity to use information
5	Context	Current issues in discipline Politics Economic climate

Results

All 30 of the websites could easily pass the first screen; it was clear that they had competence, credibility, experience, and skills. The websites were under

the auspices of several different kinds of organizations, all with national and international credibility. The auspices included universities, private foundations, public associations, and non-profit organizations. Many of the websites had multiple, collaborative auspices. They all had records of research or research dissemination. Staff members had doctoral degrees and practice experience.

The other screen that was easy to examine was the medium for dissemination. There was a range of methods. As Table 2 illustrates, all 30 had Internet access, though two of the sites were not very user-friendly nor updated frequently. Ninety percent of the sites had a database of research, and most sites (80%) had downloadable publications. The quality of the databases varied. Some sites had a large database, current research, and excellent search criteria, but others had more limited offerings. Only one or two sites offered such luxuries as digital movie clips, free cd or video, or intranet. The most interesting sites used a full array of the mediums for dissemination.

Table 2. Types of Mediums Used for Dissemination

Medium (n=30)	**Number of Sites Using Medium**	**Percent of Sites Using Medium**
Internet	30	100%
Database of research	27	90%
Downloadable publications	24	80%
News articles & briefs	23	76%
Annual reports	12	40%
Conferences	11	36%
Video for purchase	11	36%
Networking/mentoring	10	33%
Technical assistance online	7	23%
FAQ section	8	26%
Event calendar	5	16%
Discussion board	5	16%
Partnership library	5	16%
Speeches online	3	10%
Replication tool kits	2	6%
Power Points online	2	6%
Articles to purchase	2	6%
Digital clips/podcasts	2	6%
Testimonials	1	3%
Free CD/video/DVD	1	3%
Intranet to subscribers	1	3%

The screens for content, targeted user, and context were more difficult to rate. The content descriptors of methodology, outcomes, comprehensiveness, utility, and cost-effectiveness did not apply to every website. Most sites contained composites of many different research studies. The descriptor that was

most appropriate was comprehensiveness. Comprehensiveness is defined as inclusive and including a wide variety of parental involvement research and information. Only 5 of the 30 sites (16%) could be considered comprehensive.

The researchers were not able to rate the targeted user descriptors. The information on perceived relevance to the user, the user's readiness to change, and the user's capacity to use information was not available because, in most cases, the researchers did not know who was actually using the website. A few sites did provide counters and user-feedback options. One of the sites provided an ongoing listserv, and another requested the completion of a user survey if you downloaded materials. One site requested that you provide feedback on the appropriateness of the material and how you used it after each monthly newsletter that was distributed. The majority of the sites were more geared to educators and professionals rather than to family and community members.

Since the researchers reviewed all of the websites at the same time, the current issues in the field, politics, and economic climate did not vary. Context would be important if we were looking at the process of dissemination across time periods or across different targeted users.

The good news from this study is that there were some promising practices in place that will help bridge the gap between research and practice and also help family-school partnership programs improve their own websites. "Promising practices" is used to describe best practices that show potential for bridging the gap between research and practice. Table 3 describes a few of the best family-school partnership websites that disseminate research to practitioners and the community. The list is only illustrative, not exhaustive; there are other websites that have some excellent features. Following are general characteristics shared by all the best examples of websites:

- Audience input
- Downloadable materials
- Focus on targeted audiences
- Links to other resources
- Publications and resources
- Technical assistance
- Timely with regular updates
- User-friendly

Table 3. Some Examples of Promising Practices from Five Family-School Partnership Websites*

Organization	See individual web addresses below for examples	Specific Promising Practices
Center for Mental Health in Schools	http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/temphome.htm	• Feedback Link • First Visit Section • Hot Topics • Network & Interact • Online Clearinghouse • Practitioner Exchange • Table of Contents • Weekly News
Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) Harvard Family Research Project	http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine.html	• Evaluation Exchange • FINE Forum • Membership • Member Insights • Monthly Announcements • Research Links • What's New
National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL)	http://www.sedl.org/connections	• Connection Collection (searchable) • Publications in Spanish & English • Research Syntheses • Strategy Briefs (text) • Strategy Briefs (interactive) • Tool Kits
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)	http://www.ncpie.org	• Action Briefs • Monthly Updates • Organizational Database • Resources Categorized • Reviews of Research • Searchable Site • Videos
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Johns Hopkins University	http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/index.htm	• Awards • Membership • NNPS Model • Professional Development • Promising Practices (annually) • Research Summaries • Success Stories

*These are just a few examples of websites with promising examples. The listing of promising practices is not exhaustive; it is for illustration only.

Interactive websites hold great promise for increasing the use of research. The sites that offered online technical assistance, mentoring, and discussion engage the user in a dialogue and offer the prospect of ongoing improvement in translating research to practice. These websites sent a clear message of openness and partnership between the research and practice communities.

Being current is another telling sign of an effective website. The website of the Academic Development Institute (www.adi.org) began publishing this journal online, available freely without a subscription, in Fall 2007; this is an excellent strategy for disseminating the research in a timely manner and sharing it with a wide audience.

Although only two sites used digital movie clips, using digital clips was an excellent way to see research put into practice. The visual and auditory demonstration of a practice might be appealing to many users who are accustomed to brief television and Internet clips. Podcasts are a new addition to websites, and the Intercultural Development Research Association has some excellent examples on their website (www.idra.org). For example, one podcast talked about a new publication in which the IDRA Parental Involvement Resource Center was featured and also provided links to free copies of the publication.

Replication tool kits were not used often, but they also hold much promise. SEDL (www.sedl.org) is known for some excellent tool kits that include notebooks, cds, and interactive modules. The sites that had tool kits usually had a full array of options and also required feedback about the results of using the tool kits. Card (2001) discusses the use of tool kits as a best practice because users are required to reevaluate the program in their location to see if it is still effective. The results are used to edit, clarify, and strengthen the research-based intervention.

Another promising practice was that a few sites were bilingual and offered publication summaries in English and Spanish. Others offered the same information in a variety of formats. For example, you could get the same information from a short video clip, an audiotaped speech, a news brief, a case study, or a formal research report. This flexibility in delivery methods increases the possibility of reaching diverse audiences with diverse learning styles. Varied methods of delivery also increase opportunities for families and community members to learn about research.

On the technical side, there are some excellent sites that discuss web design. Although website design was not the focus of this analysis, the subject is related to how content is accessed and received. A recent article "10 Ideas for Excellent Web Design" by Matt Knowles (2008; see http://www.aestheticdesign.com/philosophy.html) provides some helpful suggestions for making websites unique, simple, easy to navigate, and affordable.

Next Steps

To understand dissemination and its role in research utilization in the field of family-school partnerships, we need to do much more work. This work should begin by increasing collaboration between researchers and family-school partnership practitioners. Collaboration is a two-way process, and both researchers and practitioners must be involved at each stage. Practitioners must explain their interests and needs, and researchers must listen. Researchers must ask what the research needs and interests are before they start; they must involve practitioners from the very first step. Dissemination of research is also not a one-way street. When the research is disseminated, there needs to be ample opportunity for dialogue and feedback about what the results mean. Researchers must involve practitioners in the whole research-dissemination process.

Because many of the websites that were reviewed in this study were never clear about their targeted audience, it was difficult to determine if they were actually implementing their dissemination plan. If we talk with our colleagues in writing classes, we quickly realize that “audience” has been a missing link in the research utilization and dissemination process for family-school partnership research. Steven Hale (2006) suggests that writing classes begin with reminding students to think about their audience before they write one word. Instructors remind students that knowing your audience will not only make the process of writing easier, it will also help you get your message across. Understanding your audience is directly related to your purpose and goal. If family-school partnership researchers understood their audiences more clearly in research, perhaps they would be clearer about their goals and develop more appropriate research and dissemination methods for the communities they are trying to reach. If family-school partnership practitioners were involved in research from the beginning (asking questions, discussing design, perhaps even collecting data), they would be more apt to use the results. If practitioners were involved early, they would also be able to assist in appropriate dissemination strategies. Understanding and involving the audience of family-school practitioners would definitely affect both the style and the activities that researchers use.

From the very beginning of the research design, family-school partnership researchers need to have a dissemination plan that is focused on a specific, targeted audience, and then ask a series of questions that look at congruence between stated goals and measured effect. Because programs must be transportable to other sites at reasonable costs (in dollars and effort), generalizability to other audiences is also a key issue. Key questions need to be asked about dissemination planning, dissemination monitoring, impact assessment, and economic efficiency for the targeted audience.

Examples of dissemination planning questions for family-school partnership programs would include:

- What is the extent and distribution of the target population?
- Whom do research centers really want to reach?
- Do they only want to reach other researchers, or do they want to reach family and community members?
- Is the program designed in conformity with its intended goals and are chances of successful implementation maximized?

Right now most dissemination efforts seem to begin with a focus on the medium of dissemination and do not begin with the targeted user, the family-school partnership practitioner. Even though many family-school partnership websites do an excellent job with specific mediums and have lots of "bells and whistles" on their websites, they may be missing the targeted audience because they did not connect with them in the beginning. Just as good evaluation practice requires a logic model, good dissemination practice demands a logic model complete with goal, input, outputs, outcome, and a clear focus on the audience of family-school partnership practitioners.

Unless researchers and family-school partnership practitioners get together and examine the dissemination issue, researchers will continue to produce research that is neglected or ignored by family-school partnership practitioners. Just as publishing an article is an inadequate approach to dissemination, only posting research on a website is inadequate. Posting on websites is an important step, but it is not the only step. We will never improve partnerships in the field of family-school partnership research if the research does not reach family and community partners.

Practitioners cannot simply throw up their hands and say this is a problem that researchers need to fix. Family-school partnership practitioners need to step up to the plate and request that researchers work with them from step one and throughout the research-dissemination process. If practitioners want research that is relevant and helpful, they must be willing to work with researchers throughout the process. Just as family-school partnership programs work with all their stakeholders to decide on annual goals and programs, they need to work with researchers to be part of the entire research-dissemination process including website development and use. Family-school partnership practitioners can no longer be only receivers of information; they need to be active participants and ask to be included in this entire process. Family-school practitioners are key stakeholders in the research-dissemination process and need to be included from step one and throughout the process.

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Public Libraries – Community Organizations Making Outreach Efforts to Help Young Children Succeed in School

Gilda Martinez

Abstract

Librarians have been working with families for years within and outside of libraries, providing access to print, motivating young children to read, and making connections with schools. Through interviews, observations, and an analysis of outreach documents from libraries in urban, suburban, and rural counties, this study sought to investigate what practices librarians were exercising to support children in preparing for school and once in school. The focus of this article is on librarians' outreach efforts to assist young children in school.

Key words: librarians, storytimes, home-school-community connections, reading, writing, community partnerships, library outreach, early literacy

The Role of Communities in Student Learning

Family, school, and community partnerships create environments to help students succeed in school. Teachers in these partnerships help families and community members feel welcome in school, understand school expectations, stay informed about student progress, and provide the support necessary for the academic success of students. Moreover, families and community members invested in these partnerships assist by providing academic support to children while they are not in school. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence explains the role that school, family, and community partnerships play in

helping students feel supported and motivated to succeed in school (Epstein, 1995).

Effective collaboration between the spheres promotes student achievement. In 1996, Henderson and Berla reviewed 66 studies, reports, and books to identify the importance of family influence on student success. They found that families and communities can make a significant difference in student achievement from preschool through high school. Parental and community involvement that extends into the school results in higher grades and lower dropout rates. In 2003, Henderson and Mapp reviewed 51 more recent studies and found similar results (cited in Averett & Rodriguez, 2003).

Joyce Epstein has studied school-family-community involvement for more than 20 years. Through her research, she has documented six types of involvement that are essential to assist student learning and progress. They are:

- parenting – helping all families establish home environments that support children as students;
- communicating – designing and conducting effective forms of communication about school programs and children's progress;
- volunteering – recruiting and organizing help and support for school functions and activities;
- learning at home – providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with school work and related activities;
- decision making – including parents in school decisions; and
- collaborating with the community – identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students, and their families (Epstein, 1995, p. 12).

The sixth type of involvement highlights the important role community organizations play in educating students. Heath and McLaughlin (1987) studied the impact of community organizations on schools and noted that organizations such as libraries can contribute to student success and are becoming increasingly necessary due to the changes occurring in family structures. For example, most have both parents in the workforce, and the rate of single-parent households is increasing (Waddock, 1995). This means that parents have less time to prepare their children for school. Thus, most parents can use support in their efforts to assist student learning (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

Sharing literacy experiences, such as having conversations, reading together, and modeling writing with children in the home has proven to be more helpful in preparing children for school than even a higher socioeconomic status. These types of activities, in other words, can compensate for socioeconomic differences (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Families are more likely to engage in these activities if they are guided in these practices. Schools and community

organizations, such as libraries, can serve to support families, as well as provide direct literacy experiences to children and youth that complement family practices (Epstein & Sanders). Libraries can collaborate with schools and other community organizations to ensure children's successful language and literacy development and to help bridge the gap between home and school often experienced by culturally diverse students and families (Hull & Schultz, 2001; Sanders, 2001).

"Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement: Recommendations for Reaching Academic Success for All Students through Family, School, and Community Partnerships" is the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) policy on home-school-community partnerships, which is based on Epstein's six types of involvement. MSDE's goals are:

(1) to communicate often about academic opportunities, school performance, student progress, and school-family partnerships;
(2) to work together to support families' parenting skills and developmental activities that prepare young children for school and promote ongoing achievement;
(3) to support academic achievement at home by reading with children, helping them with homework, and engaging them in educational activities;
(4) to have parents and community members volunteer to improve schools and support students;
(5) to collaborate on educational decisions that affect children, families, and school improvement; and
(6) to have MSDE, local school systems, community organizations, agencies, and businesses collaborate effectively and efficiently (MSDE, 2003).

Furthermore, public libraries are specifically cited in goals one, two, three and six as important resources in achieving success for students by providing summer reading programs, read-a-thons, family read-ins, early literacy promotions, hosting educational events, and sharing resources and information (MSDE, 2003). Additionally, librarians can provide assistance through the implementation of literacy projects to help parents succeed in being their child's first teacher (MSDE, 2002), which leads us to this study.

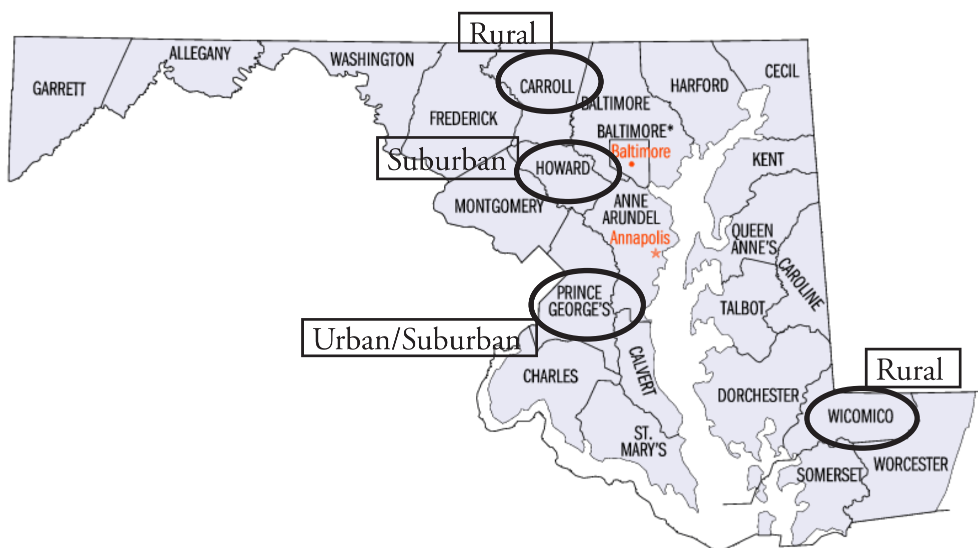
Methods

The primary purpose of this multiple case study was to describe how Maryland public librarians provide early literacy opportunities to their community members. To bring this to light, librarians from different demographic and socioeconomic areas were interviewed to better understand how early literacy is being supported through their outreach activities.

Participants and Setting

A total of 26 librarians from four counties in Maryland participated in this study. Within each county, the libraries were located in low, middle, and high socioeconomic areas (SEA). There were three libraries from Carroll County, a rural county; three libraries from Howard County, a suburban county; three libraries from Prince George's County, an urban/suburban county; and one library from Wicomico County, a rural county/low SEA and Eastern shore representative in this study (Wicomico County has only one library); totaling 10 libraries. See Figure 1 for the locations of these counties.

Figure 1. Maryland Counties in this Research Project



Note. From United States Census Bureau. (2000). *State and county quick facts*. Retrieved October 16, 2006, from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/maryland_map.html

Data Collection and Analysis

Case studies are used when research in a specific area requires answers to "how" and "why" type questions. In addition, case studies are ideal when the researcher cannot manipulate or control an event or when the event takes place in the field. A case study's distinctive potency is its capacity to disclose an array of evidence, including documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Yin, 1994). A collective case study is an instrumental case study extended to several cases. It allows the researcher to examine a number of "representative" cases, which supplies the researcher with data to demonstrate similarities or

differences that may exist between cases, and as a result, to gain deeper understanding of a given phenomenon (Stake, 2000).

The current study is a collective case study. Multiple librarians were interviewed to better understand how early literacy is being supported through storytimes and outreach activities. In addition, the researcher (a reading specialist from Towson University) wanted to investigate how libraries were assisting students, community members, and schools by examining various cases in different demographic (urban, suburban, rural) and socioeconomic (low, middle, high) areas.

A primary concern when conducting case studies is researcher bias, showing preference to one outcome versus another because the researcher would like to see certain results. All researchers are confronted with this ethical issue; to address this concern, researchers must report evidence fairly by ensuring that the data reported are accurate and transparent. Having participants and colleagues review the data for inaccuracies is one way to verify the validity of the information. Multiple viewpoints can aid in ensuring an accurate explanation of the data. Additionally, if the data does not pose any risks to the reviewers, they are more likely to provide sincere feedback (Janesick, 2000). Librarians in this study were asked to review the data for these purposes. The data they reviewed involved their existing outreach practices, which did not entail negative information or threaten their current standing; therefore, their reviews can be considered valid.

The process of relying on numerous sources of data helps the researcher generate more valid and robust cases. Therefore, outreach documents were reviewed as well. As noted by Janesick, "Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description" (2000, p. 393). Also, in the final write-up, the researcher should aim for a "thick description" of the data. That is, the researcher should "describe the cases in sufficient descriptive narrative so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings and draw conclusions (which may differ from those of the researchers)" (Stake, 1995, p. 439). In the findings section of this paper, the outreach provided by librarians is described using many examples from the various data sources, to present a thick description of their work.

Furthermore, Yin (1994) recommends the development of a case study protocol. A case study protocol is a carefully constructed outline of the steps involved in a case study. This protocol contains the rationale, research questions, target audience, conceptual/theoretical background, procedure, areas of interest, analysis plan, consent form, schedule of site visits, and interview questions. It is created and closely followed by the researcher in order to provide structure and to enable other researchers to repeat the same procedures and

yield similar results. To ensure the study's rigor and minimize researcher bias, the researcher attended to the strategies described above, beginning with developing and following the case study protocol. Data were obtained through multiple sources: interviews of supervisors and staff, observations, and review of outreach documents and materials. After the interviews were transcribed, participants were sent drafts of the results to verify the information.

The following describes the data analysis step by step:

Step one. All interviews were done in person, one-on-one, took from 30-45 minutes each, and were tape recorded and transcribed. Transcribing interviews is highly recommended (Seidman, 1998) to ensure that relevant information acquired through the interview process is captured. Through a process of reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews, which totaled 129 pages, the researcher coded key phrases that librarians used, which showed they were incorporating information from their training and were providing outreach. Coded phrases included: methods, places, and activities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Outreach Provided by 26 Maryland Public Librarians

Methods	Places	Activities
Telephone	Schools	Storytimes
Newsletters	Childcare Centers	Crafts
Flyers	Churches	Computer Instruction
Online	Community Centers	Homework Help
Newspapers	Nursing Homes	Classes
Letters	Malls	Book Clubs
Bookmobile	Satellite Libraries	Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs
Van	Rehabilitations Centers	Early Literacy Kits
	Hospitals	Library Card Drives
	Pediatricians' Offices	Book Talks

Step two. Key phrases were then compared to identify commonalities/differences among the librarians interviewed. These comparisons were not made to quantify differences in the occurrences of such phrases, but to identify similarities and differences in the context in which they were used (Flick, 2002).

Step three. Outreach documents were also collected to confirm and extend information obtained during the interviews (Dilley, 2000). Last, the interviews and outreach documents were compared within each library, between libraries in each county, and between libraries in different counties. The central themes that emerged through this process are described in the next section (note: all librarians' names used are pseudonyms).

Findings: Librarians' Early Literacy Outreach Efforts

Rural Wicomico County

The public library in Wicomico County provides outreach in various ways, and disseminates information in written form about its storytimes and other programs. Flyers are sent to childcare facilities, and programming information is printed in the local newspaper and is posted online.

The library creates and disseminates a quarterly newsletter entitled, "The Early Years," for parents and caregivers, which includes important information about how to teach children from birth to age four. This newsletter is disseminated throughout the state to other libraries and community organizations. The newsletter describes educational activities that parents and caregivers can do with children, such as leaf rubbing and painting pumpkins. It summarizes developmentally appropriate books and the purposes for reading to young children. For example, *Goodnight Moon,* by Margaret Wise Brown is described as a classic bedtime story that introduces rhyming words to babies. Then, the newsletter suggests to parents: "Go around the room and say goodnight to everything. Start your own little bedtime ritual as a way to calm down at the end of the day." The newsletter also describes community support centers that assist with preschool through high school education, health, early intervention services, disabilities, job training, and adult education.

Wicomico County librarians also engage in outreach by participating in mall events, working at satellite libraries, and visiting public schools and community organizations. Information about the library's offerings is distributed at the "Chamber Fest," an event at the local mall. At three locations (the West Side Community Center, the Willards Lions Community Center, and the Centre of Salisbury Mall) librarians have Wicomico Information and Learning Library (WILL) sites or satellite libraries. The satellite libraries do not have books available; however, information about the library's services is made available to customers and storytimes with crafts are provided. In addition, the satellite libraries have computers for librarians to teach customers how to conduct basic research and develop word processing skills.

Another example of outreach is their participation in public schools' Family Fun Nights. Jana explained:

> There are two Family Fun Nights held at schools in our area. Fruitland Elementary holds one in the fall on a Friday night. We set up a table with information on storytimes, homework help, sample materials from the library, and a really fun craft. In the corner, we place a blanket and some books in case anyone wants to take a break and read because there are a lot of activities going on at the same time. East Salisbury Elementary

holds a Family Fun Night in the spring. We set up our information on tables down a hallway and, of course, include a really fun craft. This fair is followed by the teacher-parent basketball game. In both cases, all families are encouraged to attend.

Librarians also use the bookmobile to travel six days a week visiting local schools, community centers, nursing homes, malls, childcare centers, churches, rehabilitation centers, and their own WILL sites. Librarians also use the bookmobile to conduct monthly visits to their local Head Start, Even Start, and Judith P. Hoyer Centers to provide storytimes, professional development, and books. Head Start, Even Start, and Judith P. Hoyer Centers all provide services to young children from low-income families.

Rural Carroll County

Carroll County Public Libraries produce and distribute a flyer entitled, "What's Happening at CCPL," which lists programs and classes for adults, storytimes for young children and their families, adult book clubs, and classes for homeschooled children. They also have other one-page flyers to advertise specific interests to specialized audiences, for example, storytimes for ages birth to 24 months, a sign language class, and a "Let's Take a Trip to France" class. In addition, they have book lists prepared specifically for young children that include different types of books including board books, participation stories (e.g., pull tabs, pop-ups, lift the flap), rhyming books, concept books, and story books. The flyers are distributed in schools and community organizations; the library also has programming information online.

These libraries have a bookmobile that visits places such as daycares, schools, senior centers, and the Head Start center, as well as two vans that visit home daycare centers. During librarians' visits, they distribute books, provide book talks, have library card campaigns, and present storytimes.

In addition, librarians created kits that included bookmarks, pens, paperback books, information about the purpose of reading aloud to young children, tips for reading aloud to young children, songs, rhymes, activities for different age children, storytime information, library card applications, specific information about children's language and literacy development, and "reading and library card prescriptions." These kits were distributed to local pediatricians, who personally gave them to parents with infants and young children.

Suburban Howard County

Library news and events are printed in "Great Expectations," a quarterly publication of the Howard County library system. The layout is similar to a

local newspaper but is printed in color. The first page features a message from the director of Howard County libraries, followed by announcements about author presentations (at different library locations), adult education opportunities, and book clubs. Each library branch has its own page to highlight storytime programs and programs for older children. Each library also has programming information available online. According to one librarian:

> Howard County was ranked third in the nation, according to *Hennen's American Public Library Ratings – 2004*, for its electronic uses, which include but are not limited to the online catalog, online indexes, Internet, and software.

Librarians in Howard County visit schools to facilitate library card drives during parent-teacher nights (2-3 times a year for each school). They also provide book talks and discussions to motivate students to read, and present after-school storytimes once a week as part of their "A+ Partnership" with public schools. "The A+ Partnership has doubled or tripled the amount of outreach we used to do," said Maria.

Howard County librarians also visit their local Head Start center, private schools, preschools, nursery schools, and daycares to provide storytimes. At the Head Start center, they have trained teachers in the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is a group experience for parents, caregivers, and their children, which focuses on the use of rhymes, songs, and stories. The goals of the program are many, including strengthening the parent-child bond and structuring a supportive group for parents. One of the most significant goals is helping families to provide their children with frequent language experiences. The program also helps parents and caregivers become familiar with a wide range of reading materials and activities. These experiences provide children with the essential basis for later print literacy, and also serve to involve adults in literacy activities. Spanish translators are provided as needed (Parent-Child Mother Goose, 2004).

Librarians receive calls from parents or other community members with requests that the libraries try to address. A librarian said all her efforts are worth it when, for example, "some children come back when they are in college and say they remember my storytimes."

In addition, librarians bring English books to high school English as a Second Language classes. They also offer tutoring, resources, and referrals for adults who are learning English. Debbie explained:

> It's very exciting to work in a fairly new branch with a growing and diverse community. More and more people are becoming aware of our library and the services we offer. We are hoping that by increasing our

offerings, we can offer more to the public and make library visits more of a habit.

Librarians from each library also visit new mothers at hospitals once a month to provide library cards and information about baby storytime programs. Charlotte explained, "The new director is very outreach oriented, and we are doing a lot of outreach as a part of a trend with this director." Ana added, "We've always got somebody somewhere doing outreach."

Urban Prince George's County

The Prince George's County libraries distribute a "Current News and Events" newspaper that outlines upcoming events, such as music performances and author presentations held at different library locations, summer reading programs for adults and children, book discussions, poetry groups, babysitting workshops, storytimes, puppet shows, and other educational programs for children and adults. They also have programming information available online and in local newspapers. In addition, librarians call and mail letters to local preschools and elementary schools each year to make positive connections and schedule outreach visits. Librarians commented that they were more successful scheduling outreach through phone calls than through letters.

Librarians provide book talks to schools two times a month. They also provide storytimes to daycares, preschools, and the local Judith P. Hoyer Center. If a librarian is unable to provide services at an outreach event due to illness, a substitute librarian is found to ensure continuity of all regularly scheduled connections.

Summary and Recommendations

Librarians were providing outreach to community organizations, schools, daycare centers, hospitals, and other sites where children and parents or childcare providers were present (see Table 1). While acknowledging the quality and importance of their outreach, librarians wanted to build their capacity to provide more services to their neediest populations. To accomplish this, they believed they needed more hours and needed to hire additional librarians.

While each county was working on reaching their neediest populations through various outreach practices, the effects of librarians' outreach efforts were not being systematically evaluated. As a result, librarians showed an interest in incorporating an evaluation component into their outreach practices. Conducting parent interviews to determine the effectiveness of outreach programs could potentially provide this information.

Stephanie Shauck from the Maryland State Department of Education-Division of Library Development and Services (MSDE-DLDS) identified sites for potential outreach that other librarians in Maryland provide to targeted populations. Collaborations with health service providers, social services, juvenile justice systems, prisons, work/employee training programs, and churches are taking place in other counties and have been successful.

Conclusion

This study investigated how 26 Maryland public librarians were providing early literacy opportunities to young children and their families through their outreach services. Many similarities between librarians' practices existed. All librarians knew the importance of forming home, school, and community partnerships and were working collaboratively among these spheres to help children succeed in school. Librarians were providing storytimes and literacy rich activities in schools, daycares, hospitals, community centers, and malls. They were using bookmobiles to provide access to print materials to families, caregivers, pediatricians, and teachers. These efforts were in place to address the needs of communities and reach their neediest populations, who might not ordinarily visit the public library. Through their outreach, librarians hope to inform families and community members not only of the types of activities that can promote education, but also to encourage more people to visit the library and utilize the vast resources that cannot be provided solely through outreach. In addition, librarians were willing to extend their efforts further to continue to work toward the ultimate goal of helping children thrive in school.

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A Proposal for Involving Teachers in School Integrated Services in the Province of Québec

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Abstract

In the province of Québec, there has been a movement towards creating community schools since the last education reform. School integrated services make a unique contribution to the creation of a community school, and some important challenges must be considered and overcome if the community school is to exist in Quebec as it currently exists in the rest of Canada and in the United States. This paper consists of a proposal for the use of a pull-in program, namely the consulting team model (CTM), whose aim is to support and involve teachers as part of this consultation model within full-service community schools. Over and above its multi-agency and multi-disciplinary emphasis, the CTM also incorporates the instructional interventions and the educational success of each student. CTM is presented as a fundamental component of the service delivery model that serves students with special needs which can be linked to school integrated services in the province of Québec; such a model can also be replicated elsewhere for any student. Our CTM proposal is part of a school integrated services delivery model we are working to put in place in Québec schools.

Key Words: school integrated services, service delivery model, full-service community schools, special needs students, Québec, Canada, teachers, consulting team model, intervention, prevention, inclusion, special education

Educational Orientations in Québec: Addressing the Needs of Each Student

During the last decade, Québec's Ministry of Education focused its mission toward educational success for the greatest possible number of students with a threefold mission of imparting knowledge to students, fostering their social development, and giving them qualifications for work or college (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2002). For the general curriculum, in order to achieve the prescribed mission, emphasis is placed on learning and the necessity for education agents to work together within the school and with the surrounding community. There is a clear desire for Québec schools to become educational communities that empower all of their stakeholders (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2003). Accordingly, a new policy and lines of action for special education are now acknowledging the importance of addressing every student's needs when choosing or adapting educational services (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 1999a, 1999b). According to this perspective, the least restrictive environment should be promoted whenever possible. There is a willingness to act to prevent difficulties and to address the needs of each student, while favoring their inclusion (whether partial or full inclusion) and providing integrated services whenever needed (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 1999a, 1999b). The idea is not new, but it is now clearly acknowledged. Nevertheless, if the Québec Ministry's intentions are to be realized, the plan to implement an integrated model needs to be more clearly articulated.

School-Community Relationship

The community school concept has received some attention as a result of the legislation and policies promoting the school-community relationship (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2005). Based on this model, some schools have begun to more formally integrate some community resources and services to address the needs of their students (e.g., Finn et al., 2002; Picard et al., 2005). These approaches are still isolated, and data is currently being documented to evaluate the effects on the students' school achievement (Finn et al.; Heath et al., 2004). Through amendments of the Education Act, the Ministry of Education of Québec showed its willingness to include the involvement of parents and the surrounding community in children's education. Along came the idea of developing community schools in the province of Québec. However, when one looks at the documentation provided by the Ministry of Education on this matter, although we know what it should be in practice, it is not well defined (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2005). Moreover, and most disturbingly, the Ministry of Education neglects to mention the origins of the desired community

school characteristics, although most of them are direct translations of well known papers, like those of Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003), and of Calfee, Wittwer, and Meredith's (1998) book, without any references to those authors or their work. If Québec schools are now challenged in practice, implementing community schools could be an interesting path to follow, but in order to integrate school services that really involve the teachers as professionals, some challenges must be considered and overcome.

This paper will outline issues we are facing in Québec in developing school integrated services and a proposal for implementation that could be interesting for other provinces, as well as other states or countries. We will first define and characterize a community school through a synthesis of models borrowed from U.S. and Canadian literature, followed by one specific model on school integrated services. We will then propose an integrated service model that we believe would work in Québec, namely, a consulting team model, to help serve as a link for school integrated services and the promotion of inclusion.

Methodology

The model we are proposing results from an analysis of the community school concept and the school integrated services concept and the application of the consulting team model concept. Content analyses were conducted using anasynthesis methodology developed by Silvern (1972) and further adapted by Legendre (1988). Anasynthesis corresponds to an iterative process through steps of analysis, synthesis, prototype, and simulation leading to the proposition of a model. For every document, content analysis is employed to identify and classify the elements on all definitions given, the goals or aims of a term, the praxis (i.e., the applications or the evaluations), and all other explanatory characteristics (i.e., the advantages, limitations, principles, etc.). This synthesis serves as a framework for our proposal of a school integrated services model.

Community School: A Synthesis of Definitions

In order to make a proposal inspired by the work of others in the field and adapted to the reality of Québec, we made our own synthesis of the community school concept, mostly from American documentations on the subject, since these documents were more easily accessible than those from other countries (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999; Blank et al., 2003; Calfee et al., 1998; Children's Aid Society, 2001; Dryfoos, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Kretzmann, 1997; Melaville & Blank, 1998; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999; Sanders, 2003; Veale, Morley, & Erickson, 2002).

Community schools are public schools serving as a common resource and activity center to assist their students, their families, and the surrounding community in order to promote the healthy development and educational success of every child in a given community. That explains, in part, why so many authors describe community schools as a community "hub." Many terms have been used to refer to community schools: full-service community schools, comprehensive schools, full-service schools, and extended-service schools (Children's Aid Society, 2001). However, these different terms refer to the same concept.

According to the U.S. Coalition for Community Schools, a community school offers quality educational service programs and youth development programs to its students; it also provides support to families while encouraging family and community involvement and community development (Coalition for Community Schools, 2004). Extended hours also characterize a community school. This means the school operates seven days a week, all year long, and that services and activities can occur before, during, and after the school time schedule (Coalition for Community Schools; Dryfoos, 2000, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). School integrated services also characterize a full-service community school, which may explain the complexity and multifaceted aspect of this model.

If school integrated services are at the core of a community school, the involvement and collaboration between the school staff, the parents, and the community is also an inevitable characteristic. At another level, as Lawson (2003) explains, ten types of collaboration have to be considered in designing institutions like community schools: youth-centered, parent-centered, family-centered, community, interprofessionnal, intra- and inter-organizational, intra- and inter-governmental, and international collaboration.

Also essential to a community school is a school coordinator (Calfee et al., 1998; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Melaville & Blank, 1998; Parson, 1999) whose role is to ensure that services, activities, and programs will be offered to address students' and families' needs considering the available, existing resources in a given community. The service coordinator facilitates the access to services for children and, whenever necessary, for their families. The service coordinator has to be appointed by the school and the community. Moreover, a family resource center is often part of a community school, not only to welcome parents but to provide support services within the school building. Since the institution should be supportive of the continuing education of its staff, a full-service community school becomes synonymous with quality professional development for educators. Finally, some community school models offer technical assistance to sustain the schools in providing effective, integrated school services and activities and to assist them whenever necessary.

In the different community school models we've analyzed[2] (and in some cases visited to compare the literature with observations), nothing seemed to be explicitly or systematically done to provide immediate support to the classroom teacher on a day-to-day basis as the consulting team model was intended to do. Although it seemed that support was existent, it was not included explicitly in the community school literature. It also appeared that the teachers and the community school staff were not necessarily one and the same, maybe in part because their salaries were not necessarily coming from the same source. For example, in some community school models, community school staff salaries (e.g., for social workers, speech therapists) depend on a foundation payroll, while teachers and regular school staff are on the (public) school board payroll.

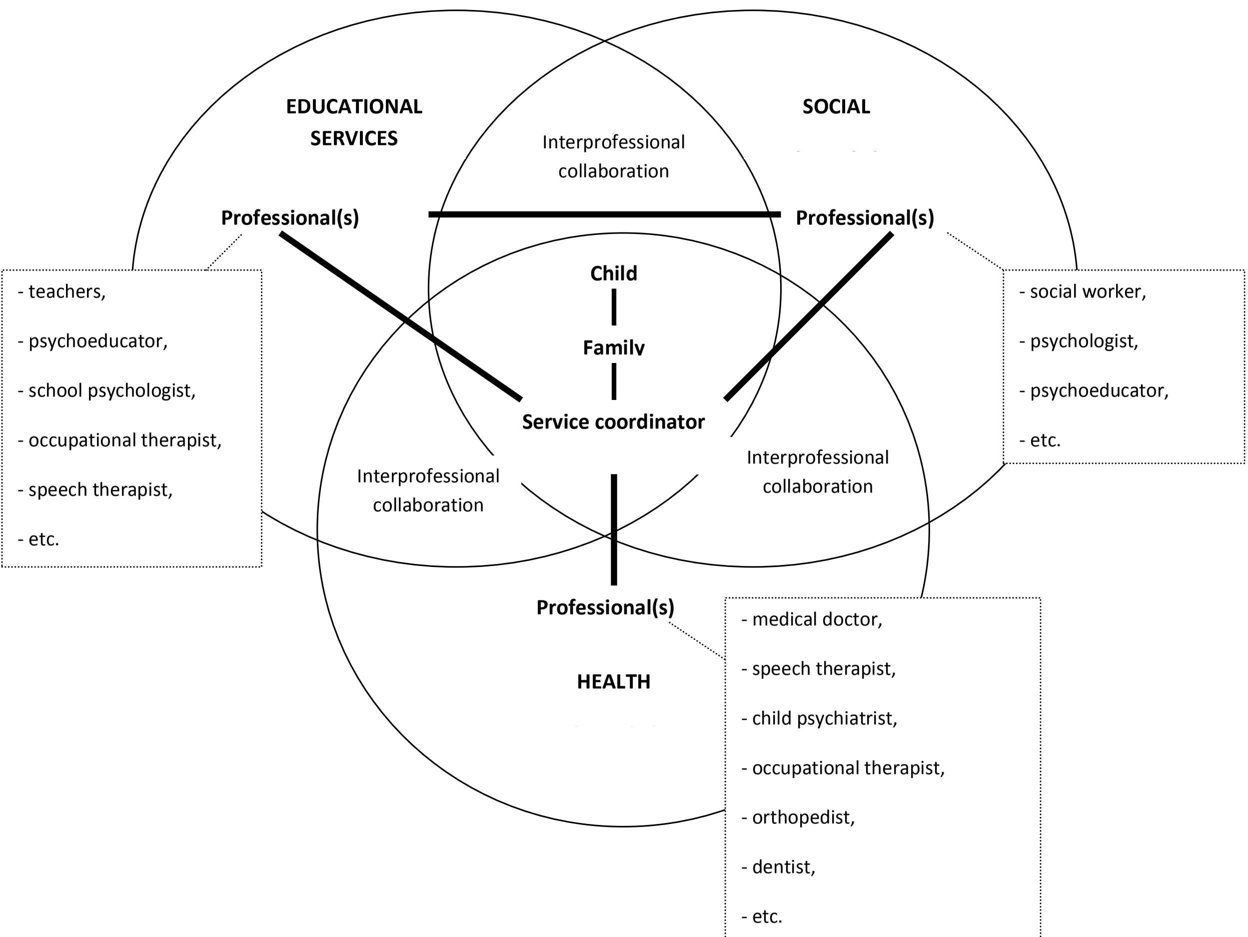
With these basic characteristics, a full-service community school seems to be the ideal setting for teachers to be considered as real professionals. Curiously, inclusive service delivery models for children with particular needs did not seem to be fully implemented, although pull-in and pre-referral intervention programs could serve integrated services in this perspective.

School Integrated Services

As shown in Figure 1, school integrated services can be defined as the process by which educational, social, and health services are coordinated in a concerted way and offered to students and their families in order to address their needs. Services can be located within the school building (i.e., school-based services), near the school but accessible from there (i.e., school-linked services), or in the community (i.e., community-based services). Community-based services are not necessarily linked to school activities or to the students, unlike school-based and the school-linked services. Whether based within the school building or not, school integrated services are a key to ensure and facilitate coherence among interventions. Interprofessional collaboration then becomes a main challenge that includes "engagement in an interactive process, mutual control over decisions made and actions taken, some common goals and values, and shared ownership of responsibilities and outcomes" (Walsh & Park-Taylor, 2003, p. 16). In other words, "the key is to foster partnerships that both ensure quality services and promote academic achievement" (Murray & Weissbourd, 2003, p. 183).

One issue facing full-service community schools development in Québec is the need for schools to clarify their needs before asking for any collaboration with the community, including social and health services agencies. School integrated services must be directed toward the children's educational success,

Figure 1. A school integrated services framework.



otherwise, there would be no real reason to link the needed services to schools, since all public services can be available somewhere in the community. Still, when a child is concerned, the fragmentation of services is an acknowledged problem in our public system, due to a lack of coordination between the school and other agencies providing services to the child and his/her family.

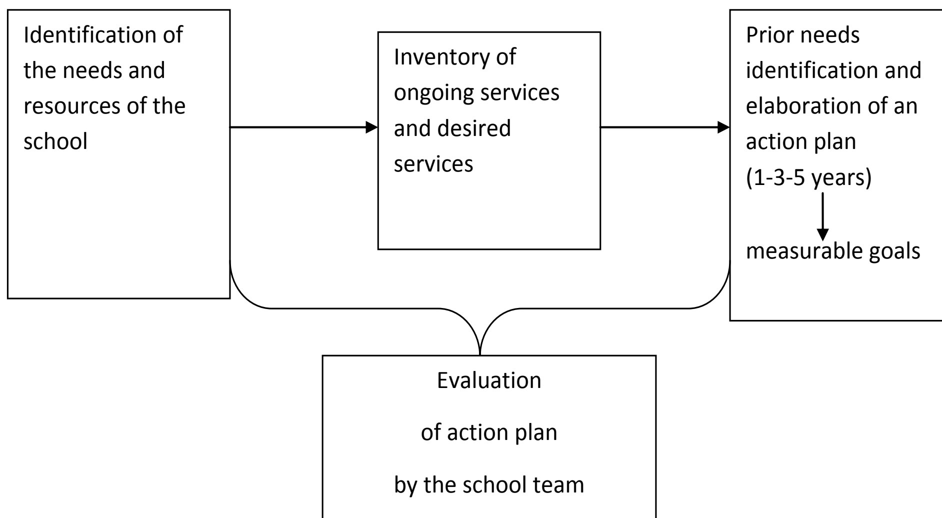
Complementary services do actually exist in Québec's public school system. Among other things, they include special education, speech therapy, psychology, psychoeducation, and social and health services (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 2002). Nevertheless, complementary services are not coordinated from a school integrated services perspective, regardless of administrative issues. Rarely, if ever, are a student's teachers invited to participate in the individualized health and social service planning, even though educational service is part of the services provided to a child in a public system. In this kind of relationship, social and health services agencies can have a tendency to impose their visions on the educational system, since the non-teaching professionals are not necessarily working alongside the teachers. Although special schools often work in collaboration with health and social services agencies, it is not yet common in regular public schools, and when these actions are taken, the procedure of supporting a teacher in his/her classroom is not systematic. In clarifying their demands about the services their students need, schools could better contribute to the students' success. Moreover, it would make more sense to initiate children's services from their school settings, since every child must go to school. Based on this premise, we propose the use of a consulting team model to serve as a link between the school, the family, and the community to make school integrated services work and to favor educational inclusion.

The Planning Steps From a School's Perspective

In trying to develop the best possible model, considering the experiences of others, we established some standards from a synthesis of documentations related to the planning and realization stages of community schools and integrated services initiatives. Based on papers from Annie E. Casey Foundation (1999), Blank et al. (2003), Calfee et al. (1998), Children's Aid Society (2001), Dryfoos and Maguire (2002), Epstein et al. (2002), Kretzmann (1997), Melaville and Blank (1998), Raffaele and Knoff (1999), Sanders (2003), and Veale et al. (2002), the following guidelines emerged and are shown in Figure 2.

A team responsible for the implementation of services must begin by identifying the needs and resources of the school by gathering objective information on the school, its surroundings, and its characteristics. An inventory of the ongoing services and the desired services must also be made. In order to do so, objective data should be collected through group and individual interviews

Figure 2. Planning steps for implementation of services.



with the professionals involved, including teachers and other professionals working with children in the school and outside of the school (i.e., community agencies), and non-professionals, including parents and children. From there, the team will be able to identify the needs from which an action plan will be formulated. As pointed out by Calfee et al. (1998) and Dryfoos and Maguire (2003), measurable goals must be set out in relation to each identified need. According to the authors, this planning stage could take up to a full year to complete. In the meantime, information on the full-service community school concept and the school integrated services concept should be provided to school staff, including the school council and the community agencies working alongside the school. Since it is an essential component of a community school, professional development for the school staff should also be planned. In addition, the services and activities plan should apply to the next school year and then be extended for a period of 3 to 5 years. This plan should be reviewed annually so the whole process stays dynamic, adjusting with the school's changing reality. The implementation of these steps are dependent upon the composition of the team and the ability of its members to gather data objectively through focus groups or interviews and to document these facts in a systematic manner. Later, an evaluation of the effects of this model on children, their parents, and teachers should be conducted and examined. Based on these guidelines, a full-service community school would evolve as it continues the process of developing.

A School Consulting Team Model

A school consulting team model (CTM) is a pull-in program intended to assist a teacher in his/her work with the identified children when the assistance of a multi-disciplinary team is necessary. In this model, the team members involve all the professionals that may be needed depending on the difficulty encountered by the teacher. The child's parents are also involved in the creation of the individualized action plan. In a school where integrated services occur, systematic implementation of a CTM could help in assisting and supporting the teachers in their actions. To work efficiently, the team should meet on a regular basis, even once a week (Idol & West, 1987; Yau, 1988).

The implementation of a school CTM could serve as a link between what's going on in the classroom and the other professionals working with the same child in the school and outside the school. Before going any further, we will describe the origins of the CTM within service delivery models used in regular and special education.

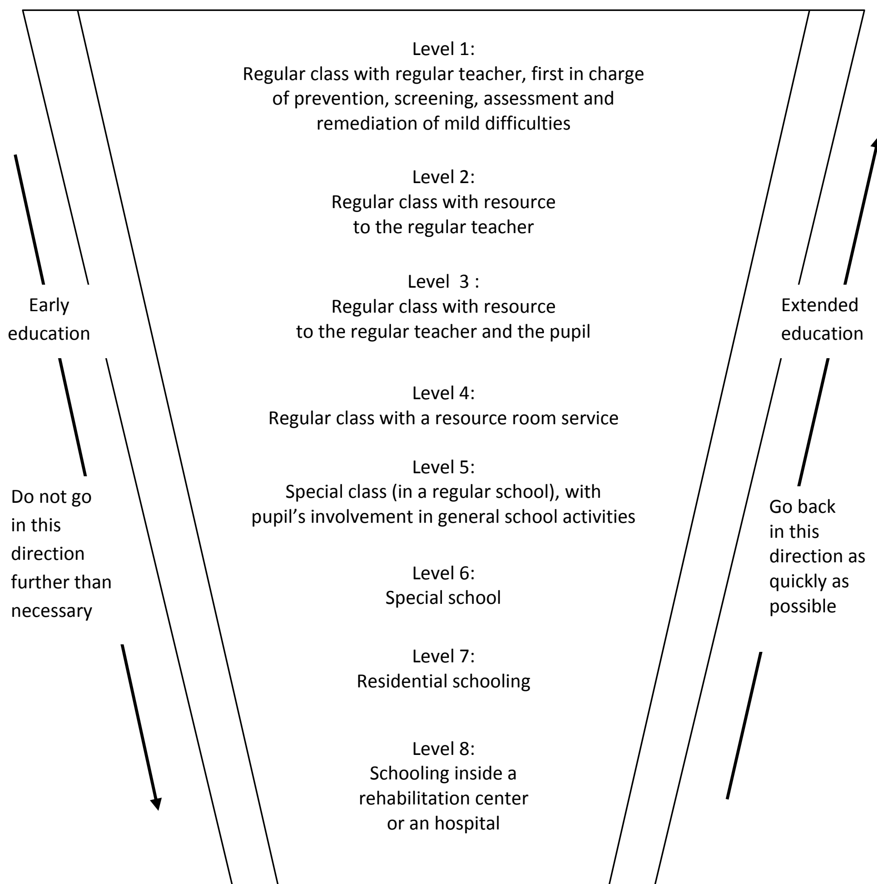
Service Delivery Models for Every Child

There is a range of service delivery models that could be considered to address every student's needs, and inspiration can come from a cascade system proposed in the 1970s to organize educational services for special needs students (e.g., Figure 3) as outlined by Reynolds' 1962 model (see also Deno, 1970). Emphasizing the least restrictive environment perspective, we rearranged the first five levels of schooling of this cascade system and present them as a typology, allowing us to classify the service delivery models that can be used in education (Trépanier, 2005). As shown in Figure 4, student services can be provided outside the regular class, inside the regular class, directly to the teacher, or in combination, depending upon the needs of a student.

In the field of special education, the pull-out or pull-aside programs correspond to the models of service delivered outside the regular class, like the resource room, one-on-one instruction, or any type of special or remedial classes that can take place in an elementary or high school (Trépanier, 2005). The duration of the service provided, the amount of time spent outside the regular classroom, and the number of students served at once are often the criterion used to distinguish these various models and their application. Based on this perspective, an "outside the regular class" model could be applied when a professional, including a teacher, can work with one or more students outside the regular class.

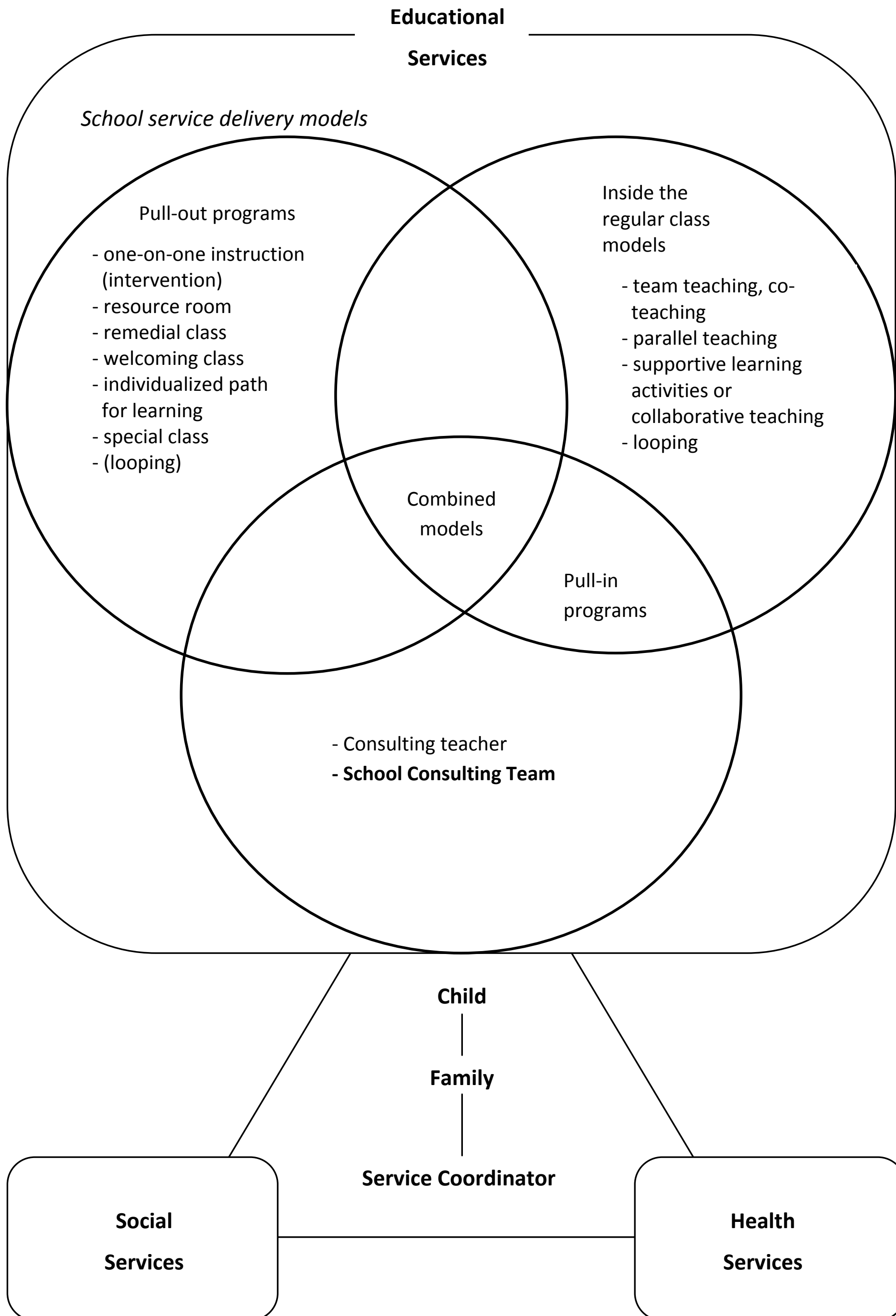
The other service delivery models are referred to as pull-in programs. Pull-in programs consist of the provision of educational services to a student allowing

Figure 3. Cascade System as proposed by the Ministry of Education of Québec in 1976 (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, 1976, p. 637 - free translation)



him/her to be serviced in the regular class; this explains why these models are favored for inclusion. For example, two or more professionals (including the teacher) can coordinate their interventions within the class, as in a team teaching model. On the other hand, the professionals (including the special education teacher,[3] depending on the needs of the student) can offer some individual consultation to the student's regular teacher. A professional team can also meet together for the planning of services and educational interventions. Some applications of the consultation model are well known in the field of psychology. As a matter of fact, the general typology's framework could be used to classify the service delivery models used by other specialists such as the speech therapist or the school psychologist. Here, we are using it to help provide an understanding of the service delivery models implemented (or that could be implemented) by the special education teacher to address the needs of each student.

Figure 4. School service delivery models within a school integrated services framework.



Usually, when the time comes to choose a special education service delivery model for a child, the “administrative solution” too often still prevails in real life, meaning the “student must fit the system” in what the school boards and/or the school principal and teachers believe to be the right thing for each student, rather than effectively adapting to the student’s needs. At a political level, an agreement was established between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social and Health Services to support the idea of integrating services for children to address every child’s needs and to provide some guidelines for regional and local agreements to occur (Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec, 2003). Even though such policies exist, the implementation still remains uncertain.

A Link for School Integrated Services

Consultation team models may be referred to by a variety of different terms such as teacher support teams or problem solving teams, and other collaborative consultation practices may include similar or different arrangements promoting collaboration and consultation between general and special education agents. Most of them were developed to help regular classroom teachers cope with students with special needs in inclusionary settings. If collaborative consultation practices were primarily for special education and school psychologists (1970s to 1990s), they are now more inclusive in their approach and involve all the education agents (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2005). In the community schools’ literature review conducted for this analysis, it was found that case management teams or student-study teams (or the equivalent) are implemented to identify the services a child and his/her family may need. These may correspond to the individualized service plan (ISP) and do not necessarily include a specific individualized education plan (IEP) involving the teacher(s) and what is going on in the classroom during the day. We believe ISP meetings should be kept apart from the meetings that would occur while the service plan is implemented. By providing some support, a school consulting team (CT) would insure real participation, collaboration, and understanding of the teachers (general and special education) in the school integrated services process. In the Detroit Public Schools, resource coordinating teams (RCT) were put in place in schools according to Adelman and Taylor’s framework (2002). However, if a school CT coordinates its services with RCT, the two teams differ in orientation toward educational and, consequently, instructional success. Moreover, the consulting team model (CTM) that we are proposing allows one to distinguish intervention models from service delivery models that can be used in (special) education.

A problem solving approach could be used to provide a plan of action for the school CTM we are proposing. The phases of the Stephens/systems model (Stephens, 1997, in Dettmer et al., 2005), which resemble the IEP process, could easily be used to help structure CTM meetings: (1) assessment, observation, data collection; (2) specification of objectives, problem identification; (3) planning, finding ways to resolve the problems; (4) implementation of the plan, measurement of progress; and (5) evaluation, data analysis. The difference between our proposal and the IEP process would be to assist the teacher in daily interventions and program modifications or communication with parents (as in a Teacher Assistance Team, see Wood, 2006) during the application of the IEP. In other words, to link school integrated services with what is going on in a child's classroom, those steps could be applied along with the IEP follow-up. The consulting team would not be intended to propose services for a child but to support the teacher in his/her interventions prescribed by the IEP.

An Overall Process for School Integrated Services

School integrated services represent the necessary linkage between the school and the community that can make service delivery more efficient in addressing children's needs. There are two case scenarios in which the school consulting team (CT) could play a key role when school integrated services are concerned. The first is when a child already has an Individualized Service Plan (ISP), and the second is when a child does not have one. If a child has an ISP, it means some professionals from health and/or social service agencies have met with the child and the parents, and they have identified and mapped the needed services. In Québec, education is among the mandatory services that must be provided to a child ages 5 to 18, or 21 if handicapped.

In a case where a child would have an ISP, the school CT would then ensure and facilitate the cohesion of the interventions in setting up the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. Furthermore, to support the teacher's actions promoting the concerned child's success in school, the CT could be involved occasionally or on a regular basis, depending on the intensity of the needed support. Thus, the school CT serves as one service delivery model among others that may involve direct interventions from other professionals (e.g., school psychologist, speech therapist, resource teacher, occupational therapist, etc.). In sum, the existence of the school CT would promote collaboration among the professionals from the health and social services agencies and the school for the benefit of a child's welfare, which, in our contemporary society, is connected to educational success. It could also facilitate the involvement of the school's professionals in the ISP process while serving as a bridge between the

organizations providing the services, preventing disconnected or duplicated services. The school CT would then be an essential part of the process whenever a child who has an ISP goes to school.

The other possible case scenario where a school CT could be needed is when a child who does not have an ISP is showing some difficulties: either emotional, behavioral, and/or educationally related, with or without a formal diagnosis. This kind of child could be at risk and not able to succeed in school if no help is offered or if the help provided is inadequate, possibly resulting from each professional trying his/her best, but in isolation from the others. The first actions of the CT in this case would be to provide a regular service delivery model for at-risk students. An IEP should then be made and after a semester or less, depending on the situation, the CT could confer and ask the social and health agencies for the necessary evaluations that could lead to the elaboration of an ISP. Figure 4 simply illustrates where a school CT is situated if school integrated services are desired.

When a child goes to school, the teacher becomes the front line education agent and is often the first to detect needs or difficulties the student may be experiencing. After referring to a service coordinator in the school (or, if not available, to the resource teacher) who would serve as the primary link between the school and the community professionals, a school CT would begin the process of consultation. Accordingly, the CT meetings play a key role in the prevention of further difficulties, as well as in providing understanding of the needed interventions if the child's difficulties persist.

Conclusion

In this paper, we presented a school consulting team model (CTM) as a way of linking school integrated services while ensuring that the child's educational success is at the core of every professional's actions. Since a school consulting team (CT) is one available educational service delivery model among others, the aim of the CT meetings should always be to ensure the educational success of the concerned child. In a school integrated services context, CTM as we propose it is intended to help educators coordinate their actions in the school while helping each individual teacher to cope with the students' difficulties or challenges. CTM then becomes the minimum service delivery model to put in place when a school offers integrated services, whether the student is taught in a regular class or in a special class. In this context, a school CT would not be intended to replace the ISP or other team meetings sometimes necessary outside the school life of the concerned child. We are also not proposing that the school adopt the CTM as the only service delivery model or that it replace

essential direct interventions. Because complementary service professionals should work together in order to help the same children, we are arguing for CTM to exist in each school when integrated services become necessary for a child. In this perspective, we believe our proposal will help clarify the turf war that can occur in such a context (Heath et al., 2006). In the near future, we will work on implementing these recommendations in urban schools through the English and French school boards system. First, we recommend systematically employing a CT model for the integrated services for all children with an ISP, and then, we will help to put in place a school CT to help each child who may need complementary services to succeed in school.

Moreover, these community school services will provide children with necessary support needed to succeed academically and will also provide easy access to services for their families. The school consulting team could then become the place to share, if ever necessary, relevant information about the child's daily living situation at home and at school and help the educators better understand a student's behavior and plan accordingly. In no way should the school CT replace social or health services team meetings, since their goals differ widely. Indeed, CTM, when involved through the school, aims to make each child's educational success at the core of every professional action. In the meantime, professionals will not be working in an isolated way to provide services to the child and the family. By effectively supporting the teacher, we assert that the professionals' actions and the actions of the parents could be well coordinated and clearly goal-directed.

Although there are many community school models in existence around the world, they are often limited with respect to teachers' involvement and in facilitating the relationship between other professionals to support educational success. Based upon this concern, we are recommending a consulting team model as a link for providing school integrated services.

Endnotes

[1]For example, see MELS. (2005). *L'école communautaire. Un carrefour pour la réussite des jeunes et le développement de la communauté. Rapport de l'équipe de travail sur le développement de l'école communautaire* [Community school. A pathway toward youth's success and the community development. Report from the working group on community school development.] (pp. 11-13).

[2]NYC Beacon Schools, Children's Aid Society Schools, CA Healthy Start Schools, and FL Full-Service Schools, among others.

[3]In this paper, we will not distinguish the special education teacher from the resource teacher and will consider the special education teacher as a teaching professional who can act in a variety of contexts, as in a resource room, a special class, and even in a regular class. In this perspective, a special education teacher can also play a role in helping the regular class teacher in preventing difficulties.

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