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Student and Parent Views on School and Community Strengths and Concerns

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STUDENT AND PARENT VIEWS ON SCHOOL AND

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

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ABSTRACT

Student and Parent Views on School and

Community Strengths and Concerns

by

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Utah State University, 2003

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Department: Family and Human Development

The Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment surveyed students in the third

through fifth grades and their parents in order to identify strengths and concerns in their

school and community. It also investigated whether or not participants considered family

counseling skills as a concern or a strength. The results showed that the concerns and

strengths identified by participants fell into three categories: family, community, and

school. Parents' primary concern was children watching TV, while children's primary

concern was getting enough sleep. Group differences were identified by ethnicity, gender,

and marital status. These differences included English/Spanish skills, children showing

respect for authority, and Accelerated Reader Program. Family counseling services was

not identified as a concern or strength. However, results indicate that schools are a

promising arena for marriage and family therapists to offer their skills in providing

needed services.

(139 pages)

To the memory of Melvin Joe Davis, my teacher

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

STUDENT AND PARENT VIEWS ON SCHOOL AND

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Needs assessments have been defined as a formal method of data collection and analysis; the intention of which is to identify the needs and/or outcomes believed to be of high priority to constituent groups (Hobbs, 1987; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985). They are considered to be the "cornerstone for effective program development, management, and evaluation" (Dykeman, 1994, p. 2).

Rapid social changes, such as increasing violence, drug use, and growing minority groups, are affecting the educational system in many ways, with classroom behavior and academic success being two of the most apparent. Schools are under mounting pressure to provide help to students with social, family, and other problems (Walkush & Hagans, 1993), yet funding to accomplish this task is shrinking (Lusky & Hayes, 2001). In response, administrators and communities are increasingly demanding that school programs be able to show that they are meeting the needs of students (Lusky & Hayes). Needs assessments are a common tool used by schools find out what the needs of their students are (Matczynski & Rogus, 1985). The wealth of information produced in needs assessments can be used in a number of ways in addition to the identification of needs. It can be used to prioritize needs, as a guideline for program development, and to create a baseline for future evaluation of program effectiveness.

As with other schools and communities, Hyrum, Utah, school officials desired to conduct a needs assessment to address their concerns about school programming and

effectiveness. In addition, growth of the community in recent years, including a growing Latino community, has raised concerns among school staff and parents regarding whether or not the needs of students and their families are being met. Such social changes combined with the desire to identify parents' and students' views on school and community concerns and strengths spurred school officials into initiating the first needs assessment to be conducted at Lincoln Elementary School. This needs assessment was an exploratory study designed to be the first-wave of a multi-stage needs assessment project. Students in the third through fifth grades and their parents were surveyed in order to identify what issues were of the greatest concern to both groups.

The issues included in this needs assessment were generated by a task force made up of representatives from different sectors in the community. Four general areas of interest were covered: family issues, literacy, social skills, and school programming and adjustment. The first goal of the present study was to identify issues that are of the most concern to the students of Lincoln Elementary School and their parents. The second goal was to identify any issues (concern or strength) on which subgroups in the population differed. Third, one item, family counseling services, was included on the survey instrument to find out if students and/or parents would specifically identify this as a concern or a strength in their community. As with each issue included in the needs assessment in this wave, it was not intended to measure satisfaction with family counseling services, but to find out if it was an issue that people would mark as a strength or concern.

This wave of the needs assessment was approached from a Systems Theory perspective. Fundamental to this theory is the concept that objects or individuals can be studied in terms of how they function in relation to other objects and/or individuals (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Also, changes, even small ones, in one subsystem will inevitably affect other subsystems and eventually the larger system (Hanson, 1995). Therefore, a school can be thought of as a system made up of smaller overlapping systems that interact with and influence each other. In turn, the school is also part of a larger system or "suprasystem," which may be the community, state, nation, etc. (Becvar & Becvar).

Systems theory can be seen at work in school systems nationwide. As federal and state funding for education shrinks, school administrators are forced to make difficult decisions about where to allocate funds. To make such decisions they must identify and prioritize needs as well as evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Carter, Spera, & Hall, 1992; Conroy & Mayer, 1994; Hawaii State Department of Education [DOE], 1999; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985). In turn, individuals in the schools, such as professional counselors, must justify their existence in the school system by showing that their programs are actually accomplishing the goals they were created to meet (Lusky & Hayes, 2001). In response, many schools have found needs assessments to be useful in helping them learn what programs are working well, what services are needed, and in identifying what issues are priorities for teachers, students, and parents (Barnett & Greenough; Hawaii State DOE; Martin, 1990; Wysong, 1984).

A general theme coming out of needs assessments done in other schools across the nation is that school administrators, teachers, and parents are concerned over a growing number of students who are failing to succeed both academically and socially (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Beyer & Smey-Richman, 1988; Gerdes & Benson, 1995). It is recognized that these children frequently have problems that are multidimensional and beyond the ability of the school system to deal with alone (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Romualdi & Sandoval, 1995).

Some of the same problems and questions that have stimulated needs assessments in other communities (e.g., social changes, what are the needs of parents and students, how and where should money be allocated?) were at work behind the Lincoln Elementary needs assessment (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Beyer & Smey-Richman, 1988; Carter et al., 1992; Gerdes & Benson, 1995; Lusky & Hayes, 2001; Martin, 1990; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL], 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993). Similar to other needs assessments the results of this project will be used to guide the next wave of the assessment process. Community leaders and officials at Lincoln Elementary planned to use the data to improve current school programs and identify unmet needs. The purpose of this study was to identify what issues students of Lincoln Elementary School and their parents consider to be strengths of the school and city and what issues cause them concern.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The majority of literature concerning the theory and methods of conducting needs assessment was written in the 1970's and 80's. Evidence that this interest remains is revealed in a fairly steady stream of needs assessment reports published from that period up to the present time.

As there is a wealth of data available about needs assessments, and a wide variety of subject matter that they cover, this review will be limited to general principles of conducting needs assessments and needs assessments having to do with the educational system. For ease in presentation, the information will be broken down into the following sub-topics: definitions, a brief history of needs assessment, the purpose of conducting a needs assessment, common types of needs assessments, basic guidelines for conducting a needs assessment and, finally, a review of actual needs assessments conducted in schools around the United States.

Definitions

This section covers some of the basic terminology frequently used in conjunction with needs assessments. These terms are common in the needs assessment literature and the definitions in this section come from the authors of the literature used in this review.

Need

Wysong (1984) defined a need as "the condition of a difference between *what*

should be [italics added] and what is" (p. 2). How people decide "what should be" is, according to several authors, heavily dependent upon the values and norms of the culture in which they live as well as the political environment of the day (Dykeman, 1994; Summers, 1987; Woodhead, 1987; Wysong).   Along a similar theme, Dykeman stated in his review of literature regarding needs of children that two ideas were common among the definitions that influence needs assessments:

> First, all definitions held that human needs fall on a continuum that runs from purely biological needs to purely social ones. Second, these definitions posited the idea that all needs beyond the purely biological are the result of political debate and consensus. (p. 4)

Wysong and Dykeman both point out the influence of political trends on what people consider needs. This has relevance for anyone conducting a needs assessment in that political trends or "environments" can change quickly, thus what the public consider needs can change quickly as well (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare [HEW], 1976). Therefore, a need identified in a study one year may not be identified again one or two years later.

Celotta and Jacobs (1991) have argued that the definition of needs assessment should be expanded to encompass future problems as it relates to the emotional experience of school-aged children. They state that need is:

> ...an actual or perceived lack of excess of a factor which contributes to current or future mental health problems. Mental health problems can be caused by both lacks and excesses. Too little stimulation will cause problems; too much stress will also cause problems. Perceptions can also cause mental health problems. For example, children who feel they do not have the "right clothes ," even when they are satisfactorily dressed, may still have a need (a need to conform) that must be dealt with. The phrase "future problems" is necessary to expand the definition to include prevention issues. (p. 2)

This definition has particular relevance to the present study as part of the goal was to obtain the perspectives of the children attending Lincoln Elementary School. It is intended that their opinions will be used to guide future needs assessments as well as the decision making processes of the agencies and institutions involved.

Several researchers have criticized the definitions of need used in assessments involving children. They hold that if input regarding needs is not sought directly from the source (i.e., the children themselves) then adult criteria are projected onto the children. The result is then just the "children's views of adult conceptualizations of their needs" (Dykeman, 1994, p. 5).

Needs Assessment

In spite of the many needs assessment reports and abundant literature about conducting needs assessments, only two authors actually defined the term. Matczynski and Rogus (1985) stated, "Needs assessment is defined as a process of identifying from constituent groups those outcomes which they believe to be most worthy of organizational focus (p. 34).

Wysong (1984) described needs assessment as "a process of identifying unfulfilled desirable objectives that can be met by a planned program" (p. 1). Hobbs (1987), in describing strategies for needs assessments, implies that needs assessments are a process of gathering information from a select group of people with the intention of informing and influencing persons with the power to make decisions. The common thread among the theoretical material is that needs assessments are a formal process of

gathering and analyzing data. Ideally this data is then used to help make informed choices about how and where to best utilize available resources.

<div align="center">Purposes of Needs Assessments</div>

Four general purposes for conducting needs assessments are evident in the literature reviewed here. First, needs assessments take the guesswork out of the program development process (U.S. Department of HEW, 1976). The information gathered can provide an understanding of what the constituent population sees as their most important needs and, in turn, help persons responsible make better decisions about what services might meet those needs. Hobbs (1987) emphasized that the needs assessment's ability to influence persons in decision-making positions makes it an effective political tool. Summers (1987) pointed out that it also allows individuals and minority groups a voice that might not otherwise be heard.

Second, once needs are identified and prioritized, information about them can be passed on to professionals and agencies with the capability of meeting those needs. Some needs are outside the scope of services provided by educational systems (Romualdi & Sandoval, 1995). Thus, persons having such needs can be linked with appropriate service providers.

Third, needs assessments can help meet the growing demand for program accountability (Lusky & Hayes, 2001; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; Russo & Kassera, 1989). School programs must be able to show positive results in order to justify the cost of their existence. Needs assessments can be used as one step in setting objectives and

creating a baseline for measuring results (Martin, 1990; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976).

Identifying which program objectives have been met and which have not guides decision

makers to the areas where improvements need to be made (Wysong, 1984).

Fourth, needs assessments are a highly effective way to increase community

support of the school and its programs (Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Hobbs, 1987). Several

researchers encourage involving people from as many different parts of the community as

possible in the organization and implementation phases of the needs assessment. This

provides the community four distinct benefits, (a) a sense of ownership in the project, (b)

increased understanding of and support for the programs resulting from the assessment,

(c) willingness to commit personal time and effort to make the programs successful, and

(d) increased community pride (Celotta & Sobol; Hobbs; Johnson & Meiller, 1987;

Martin, 1990; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976; Wysong,

1984).

History

Summers (1987) called needs assessment an "emergent social institution: an

organized behavior with underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions." He described it as

a natural development coming out of America's philosophy of the ideal relationship

between citizens and government:

> In the United States we are taught that citizens have a right to be heard and to
> expect that elected leaders and other officials will be responsive. Government
> should be "of the people, by the people, for the people." Every citizen is held to be
> equal in "the eyes of the law." (p. 4)

Political equality is one of the values and beliefs Summers refers to in his description of

needs assessment. Closely related is an assumption coming from the liberal political

ideology which says that a more equitable allocation of resources within society must be

achieved (Hobbs, 1987). Hobbs stated:

> This ideology is further predicated upon the assumption that differences exist
> among sectors in their capacity to have their needs taken into account. Implicit is
> the idea that those who have needs are often not in possession or control of the
> resources necessary to satisfy them. (p. 21)

In his discussion of the political and social contexts of needs assessments,

Summers (1987) said that interest in needs assessments surged during World War II when

congress passed the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946. This act outlines

requirements for government agencies to keep the public informed of their procedures,

rules, and organization. It also provides for public participation in the rule making

process (U.S. Department of Justice, 1947, p. 9). Summers (1987) stated, "Since then,

the processes of government decision making have been profoundly altered. Virtually

every ensuing major congressional act mandates active citizen participation in

administrative policymaking and program evaluation" (p. 8). This trend of greater citizen

participation was not limited to federal government. State and local governments adopted

the practice as well.

Hobbs (1987) described needs assessments as a natural outgrowth of America's

shift from a primarily agricultural society to a complex, industrial society. With larger

cities developing and people living farther and farther from their extended families, their

needs changed and could no longer be met by family and community. "The result has

been that the responsibility for meeting many needs has shifted to local, state, and federal government" (Hobbs, pp. 20-21).

In short, the needs assessment was born out of the combination of four factors: the political ideal of giving a voice to all groups of people, the liberal ideal of equalizing resources and access to government among sectors, the Administrative Procedures Act, and the evolution of the modern industrial society.

<div align="center">Approaches to Needs Assessments</div>

A number of authors have described different approaches to needs assessments. The descriptions of approaches covered in this section are drawn from the work of the United States Department of HEW (1976), Rothman and Gant (1987), Miller and Hustedde (1987), Johnson and Meiller (1987), and Matczynski and Rogus (1985). These authors have used varying terminology to discuss the different models of needs assessments, however, the procedures described were similar enough to allow grouping them into Rothman and Gant's two general categories: secondary analysis and social surveys.

It is worthwhile to point out, as Matczynski and Rogus (1985) have, that these approaches are not mutually exclusive, nor are they the only approaches used. As mentioned earlier, needs assessments are by necessity tailored to the circumstances and characteristics of the community and to the type of data that is desired (Johnson & Meiller, 1987). Features of the different approaches are often combined and/or modified to produce the kind of results that the designers feel will be most useful.

Secondary Analysis

According to Rothman and Gant (1987) secondary analysis is an indirect method of obtaining data about citizens' needs. In this approach community-related information that has been previously collected, tabulated, and organized is analyzed to produce primarily descriptive data about social issues. It includes two sub-approaches: reviewing social indicators and reviewing administrative and managerial records. This type of assessment is generally carried out solely by professionals with little or no public involvement.

Social Indicators

Government bureaus, research institutes, and professional organizations accumulate and synthesize a large body of statistics each year on various subjects like income levels, spending patterns, adjustment of children in school and crime to name just a few (Rothman & Gant, 1987). A person wanting to conduct a needs assessment may use this data to help identify key issues. Social indicators are a potentially powerful source of identifying needs. Rothman and Gant stated, "The advantages of social indicators are clear. Techniques of analysis are well developed, data bases are extensive and comprehensive, and access to such information is relatively straightforward" (p. 40). Social indicators are a valuable resource for researchers because of the wide variety of subjects on which data is available, the accessability of the information, and the cost effective nature of obtaining data.

Reviewing Managerial and Administrative Records

This approach is typically used with records kept by social agencies. It provides the researcher with information about client characteristics, services provided, services needed but unavailable, and referrals across agencies (Rothman & Gant, 1987).

One advantage of reviewing managerial and administrative records is that a clear view can be obtained of what services are being used, how often, and how effectively (Rothman & Gant, 1987). Other advantages are that many databases of information are readily available, many methods of secondary analysis are available, and the cost of performing analyses is relatively low (Rothman & Gant, p. 39).

Two large-scale needs assessments conducted by the Hawaii State DOE (1999) and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1992) combined secondary analysis methods with telephone surveys and mail-out surveys in order to obtain data from a variety of sources and perspectives.

The use of secondary analysis approaches is an effective, inexpensive, and efficient means of conducting a needs assessment when the desire is to collect primarily descriptive data. As demonstrated by the needs assessments mentioned above, the data collected using secondary analysis can be a valuable addition to data collected via other approaches.

Social Surveys

Three techniques for carrying out the social survey approach are described in the

literature: The Delphi technique, Nominal Group technique, and Community Level Surveys. These techniques are briefly described below.

The Delphi technique. According to Miller and Hustedde (1987), the Delphi technique was developed "to get a reliable consensus of opinion among people with exceptional knowledge about a particular subject area."

This method involves sending questionnaires to individuals and using their responses to formulate the next questionnaire. The second questionnaire is then sent to the participants and the process is repeated. Typically three to four questionnaires are used before the results are finalized in a report. Copies of the final report are sent to the participants as they have invested a significant amount of thought and time in the process (Miller & Hustedde, 1987).

A number of conditions are outlined by Miller and Hustedde (1987) that must be met if one is to use the Delphi technique. First, there must be enough time to allow for respondents to make considered responses to each questionnaire and allow for mailing times. Second, participants must have well-developed writing skills as this is the medium through which they will be responding. Third, participants must be motivated to respond as there will be no one present to stimulate a response.

Nominal Group technique. Also called the Deductive Approach by Matczynski and Rogus (1985), the Nominal Group technique brings people together to brainstorm ideas. Its design is meant to encourage creative thinking while minimizing the argumentative, competitive style of problem solving (Gerdes & Benson, 1995). Miller and Hustedde (1987) said that the Nominal Group technique, "differs from routine

meetings in that it attempts to maximize the input of every individual present and minimizes the domination of the most vocal people as well as the noninvolvement of the most reticent participant" (p. 112).

This approach is accomplished by seating participants at tables in small groups and presenting them with a clearly defined question or problem. A group facilitator oversees a multi-step process that includes anonymously writing a list of answers, presentation of answers to the groups for discussion, refinement and prioritization of responses into a list of issues or objectives (Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; Miller & Hustedde, 1987).

There are two distinct advantages of the Nominal Group technique. First, the private listing of ideas and anonymity of the voting process encourages participation and eliminates much of the social pressure to conform (Miller & Hustedde, 1985). Second, group discussions and brainstorming sessions provide an atmosphere that encourages creative decision making, increased understanding among subgroups in the community, and cooperation among community members (Gerdes & Benson, 1995).

Community Level Surveys

Matczynski and Rogus (1985) called this survey technique the Inductive Approach because it begins with a consideration of what services and/or problems already exist. Emphasis is placed upon whether present program activities are perceived as important, and whether or not they are perceived as effective. Johnson and Meiller (1987) expanded this view by pointing out the importance of adding open-ended

questions to surveys to provide an arena for individuals to express needs that the researchers did not consider or were unaware of.

The following steps to conducting a community level survey are a melding of guidelines and information outlined by Matczynski and Rogus (1985), Johnson and Meiller (1987), and the U.S. Department of HEW (1976). First, a committee, ideally made up of representatives from the community, agency representatives, and representatives from local government and schools, identify items of interest they would like to have on the questionnaire.

Second, these items are grouped into appropriate categories, refined, and redundant items are discarded. The third step is the development of the survey instrument. What form the instrument takes depends upon the type of information desired and the resources available to those conducting the assessment. Three approaches to the community survey are hearings, interviews, and mail-out surveys.

Hearings are public meetings where citizens are invited to express their opinions and concerns about needs in the community. One disadvantage of the public hearing is that some people are less likely to participate because of language barriers, peer pressure, fear of speaking in public, and so forth. Thus, opinions from important sectors of the community may be left out of the process.

Interviews can be conducted by an interviewer either face to face or via the telephone. An interviewer asks the questions from the questionnaire and records the participant's responses. This approach is one of the most expensive because of the resources that must be invested in training and compensating interviewers.

Mail-out surveys are sent to a representative cross-section of the community, filled out by the respondents, and returned to the researchers. The disadvantage to mail-out surveys is that they have a notoriously low response rate. Some researchers successfully increase the rate of response by sending reminder cards at specified intervals after the initial mailing. The advantages of this approach are its relative low cost and the chance of more honest answers due to participants responding in the privacy of their own homes.

The fourth step in the community level survey is administering questionnaire using one of the three mediums described above. Data from the questionnaires is collected and prepared for analysis. Fifth, data is analyzed and formulated into a final report that can be used to initiate change where necessary or to guide the committee to areas needing further study.

This discussion of approaches to needs assessments clearly indicates the range of possible techniques available. It is important to point out as well, that these are just some of the more common approaches and by no means the only approaches being used. Information on other techniques can be found in libraries and community extension offices.

Each needs assessment design has its inherent weaknesses and strengths. However, whatever design a researcher chooses, there are guidelines available that if followed, improve the effectiveness and usefulness of the needs assessment. The following section presents these guidelines.

Guidelines for a Successful Needs Assessment

Among the authors' works reviewed here are a large number of principles and suggestions for how to properly conduct a needs assessment. In some articles as many as 15 guidelines were outlined while others mentioned as few as four. The following are syntheses of guidelines taken from the work of Hobbs (1987), Johnson and Meiller (1987), Matczynski and Rogus (1984), Rothman and Gant (1987), Summers (1987), U.S. Department of HEW (1976), and Wysong (1984).

Design Selection

Persons wanting to conduct a needs assessment are advised to "shop around" in choosing design features that best fit the assessment objectives and suit the unique characteristics of the community (Hobbs, 1987; Johnson & Meiller; 1987; Matczynski & Rogus, 1984; Rothman & Gant, 1987; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976).

One of the most important things to consider in selecting the design for a study is the nature of the group of people "whose articulation of needs is to be assisted" (Summers, 1987, p. 17). For example, if there are many people in the group for whom reading and writing is difficult, a face-to-face or telephone interview would be more effective in obtaining useful data than a mail-out survey, especially one with open-ended questions. The instrument chosen must fit the abilities of the group being studied.

Identifying what kind of information is desired is also important to selecting the appropriate design (Summers, 1987; Wysong, 1984). If the intent is purely to gather information about the public use of services, a social indicators approach may suffice.

However, needs assessments often serve other functions such as informing the public, assuring individuals that their opinions are being heard, and the creation of an arena where citizens and officials can work together (Summers). When the latter is the case, the design must include an instrument where some method of self-report is provided for. This can be in the form of a paper and pencil survey, a telephone interview, or a face-to-face interview. Lusky and Hayes (2001) strongly encourage researchers, particularly those doing needs assessments covering guidance and counseling needs in schools, to develop instruments that are sensitive to local issues and that allow subjects to freely express their values and concerns.

The next design consideration is how to achieve a representative sample of the population. This requires considerable technical knowledge of sampling theory and design (Dooley, 1995; Summers, 1987). To illustrate, consider Gerdes and Benson's (1995) needs assessment of inner city school children. Because the school was quite large ($N = 910$), the authors wanted to include a representative sample of students in grades 1 through 9, and they wanted small groups for their nominal group process approach, the authors employed a stratified random sampling technique. In some cases, where the population is small and highly distinct as in a community-level survey, attempting a 100 % canvass of the population is appropriate (Johnson & Meiller, 1987). Examples of needs assessments surveying their entire populations are Carter et al. (1992), Dolan (1991), and Martin (1990). In each of these cases they used self-report paper-and-pencil surveys.

The final factor to take into consideration is the cost in time and money to both

the sponsoring agency and the participants. Summers (1987) stated that, "it is assumed that cost in time and money are to be kept to a minimum without jeopardizing other goals" (p. 18). Depending upon the sponsoring agency, the budget for conducting the needs assessment may be large or quite small. Some designs are inherently less expensive than others. For example, a social indicator and mail-out survey approaches are far less expensive than face-to-face interviews or nominal group process because they require fewer people to carry out the gathering of data, little training, and less time. Large agencies such as the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) can afford to include multiple approaches (social indicators, telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews, and mailed surveys) and take more time to gather data than a researcher conducting a needs assessment on a community level or at a single school.

In making the final choice of design, the four criteria described above must be considered together. As Summers (1987) stated:

> Trade-offs often become necessary, but they should be made from an enlightened position. To make wise choices, it is necessary for decision makers to be aware of alternative approaches and techniques and to understand when each is an appropriate choice. (p. 18)

Johnson and Meiller (1987) added to this by stating that "there are no absolutely right or wrong approaches to needs assessment." Rather, it is a matter of selecting an approach from the many that are available with an understanding that each has its own special advantages and disadvantages.

A needs assessment conducted by Carter et al. (1992) is an example of researchers adopting design features to fit unique population characteristics and the purpose of the

assessment. The purpose of their needs assessment was to identify the personal, social, and career development needs of rural, multi-cultural students in Louisiana. In order to accomplish this goal they implemented four design features: first, they chose a school whose population most accurately reflected the cultural and economic diversity of Louisiana. Second, because of the small population of the school they chose to administer the questionnaire to the entire student body, parents, and staff rather than using sampling techniques. Third, in order to get multiple perspectives, the authors assessed students, parents, teachers, and other staff. Fourth, they used seven versions of the assessment instrument and two methods of administration to obtain responses from the groups. Home room teachers administered questionnaires that had been adapted to the cognitive abilities of each grade level to their students. Students were then given questionnaires to take home to their parents. Parents and members of the school staff read and completed questionnaires on their own.

The above example is just one of many needs assessments that demonstrate the flexibility researchers have in designing a needs assessment to accomplish the intended goals of their project. No two needs assessments reviewed in the present study were identical in design even when they had very similar goals.

Involve the Public

A dilemma exists for researchers in whether or not to involve laypersons in needs assessments in roles other than respondent. Some researchers have expressed concern that the scientific accuracy of the assessment is jeopardized when laypersons are involved

in such things as survey construction, interviewing, and coding data (Johnson & Meiller, 1987). On the other hand, when citizens do not participate there are risks of the community feeling no sense of ownership in the project and giving little credence to the results. The results of the needs assessment, however accurate and important they are, may then end up shelved and forgotten rather than used as a catalyst for change.

A number of authors encouraged the involvement of citizens from the community and representatives from agencies such as schools, health care agencies, businesses, minority groups, and any others who have an interest in the community (Doherty, 2000; Johnson & Meiller, 1987; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976). Involving the community has several advantages alongside the sense of ownership and community pride already mentioned. A more broad range of perspectives is represented, reducing the chance that a false sense of consensus exists concerning community needs (Johnson & Meiller). Volunteers benefit from the educational experience of helping conduct the survey, and the monetary costs of hiring an outside agency to conduct the assessment can be offset by the volunteer labor. Finally, any changes made may affect the entire community. People who have invested time and effort in the needs assessment process are more likely to support those changes (Celotta & Jacobs, 1982). Thus, the chances of successfully making changes are enhanced (Celotta & Jacobs; Dillman, 1987; U.S. Department of HEW).

Dillman (1987) also encourages the involvement of local media in advertising the upcoming needs assessment. The media can encourage potential respondents to participate fully, thereby increasing the response rate. Individuals who know that a needs

assessment is going to take place and know what its purpose is are more likely to take an interest in the results. They are also more likely to actively support any resulting community programs or changes (Dillman).

The disadvantage of involving laypersons and agency representatives appears to be outweighed by the advantages. Barnett and Greenough (1999), Celotta and Sobol (1983), Hawaii State DOE (1999), Martin (1990), Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1998), and Walkush and Hagans, (1992) reported a successful increase in community support for school programs as a direct result of the needs assessment process.

The risk of jeopardizing scientific accuracy was the only disadvantage of involving laypersons in the needs assessment process mentioned in any of the literature. The advantages, however, are numerous. It is apparent that the authors referred to above consider the advantages worth the risk as they strongly encourage anyone conducting a needs assessment to involve the public on multiple levels.

Seek Technical Assistance

Conducting needs assessments can be thought of in terms of a spectrum. At one end are assessments conducted solely by professionals while at the other end are assessments conducted by citizen groups and/or political interest groups. The assessments conducted by citizen or political interest groups may have a lot of support from parts of the community, but the resulting data may not be accepted by decision makers and the broader community because of perceived bias. These assessments are at times hastily

done with little or no adherence to scientific principles for increasing validity. Thus, the validity and generalizability of the results is questionable.

Persons who are planning to conduct a needs assessment are encouraged by Hobbs (1987) to seek out expert technical assistance about design and method early in the planning process. He suggests that persons with the necessary expertise may be found in the community or through a local college or state university.

An outside source of assistance in the design stage of a needs assessment adds a measure of impartiality to the process, improves the validity of the study, and legitimizes it to the decision makers, community agencies, and citizens.

Communicate the Purpose

Informing the public and/or potential respondents of the purpose of the needs assessment implies that those conducting it have clear objectives and know precisely how the resulting data will be used. Dillman (1987) stated that "few issues are more important, or as often ignored, as exactly how results are to be used in the end" (p. 193). Two common reasons that needs assessments have either a poor response rate or the data do not get used are (1) the purpose of the needs assessment and intended uses of the data do not get communicated to the prospective audience, and (2) the value (in terms of potential change) to the individual and community in responding is not communicated to the prospective respondents (Dillman; Johnson & Meiller, 1987; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976). Ensuring that this information is provided for respondents in advance, whether it be through the media, letters, or other public announcements, is vital to the

success of the needs assessment.

Identify Whose Needs Are to Be Assessed

Inherent to the nature of a needs assessment is the dependence upon participants taking some initiative, if only taking the initiative to fill out a questionnaire. Some groups are naturally less active politically (Hobbs, 1987). These may be reticent to participate for any number of reasons, a few of which might be: illiteracy, language barriers, and difficulty putting thoughts into words.

Needs assessments can be very successful in obtaining viewpoints of disparate groups within a community. To accomplish this, it is necessary for those conducting a needs assessment to take measures that will include responses from all segments of the population (Hobbs, 1987).

Continuous Reassessment

The U.S. Department of HEW (1976) encouraged the systematic use of needs assessments to reassess needs and the success of any resulting programs. One reason for this was that there are at times "rapid shifts in citizen perceptions of need" (U.S. Department of HEW, p. 6). Regularly assessing needs and the effectiveness of programs helps build flexibility into programs by keeping administrators informed of changes and allowing for adjustments to be made. Comparisons between current results and previous years' results can provide indications of the "extent to which particular needs have been satisfied during that period" (U.S. Department of HEW, p. 23).

The guidelines listed above are not inclusive of all advice given among available

needs assessment literature. They do, however, provide basic information that will help build a solid foundation from which to launch a successful needs assessment.

<p style="text-align:center">Needs Assessment Results</p>

Needs assessments have been conducted in elementary schools on a wide variety of subjects. For example, Miller (1977) conducted a needs assessment solely on the subject of career development needs of nine-year-olds. O'Malley (1981) assessed the educational needs for minority children with limited English proficiency. Beyer and Smey-Richman (1989) assessed educational needs of "at-risk" students in non-urban settings. More recently, the Hawaii State DOE (1999) conducted a needs assessment that covered 12 areas of concern. The 12 subjects they covered were accountability, administration, communication, curriculum and instruction, funding, policies and rule, research and development, school and system environment, staffing, student outcomes, and technology. These needs assessments are just a few of those included in this review, but they provide some idea of the range of issues that needs assessments are being used to investigate.

The assessments chosen for review here are those whose subject matter was similar to the type of information sought in this project. A number of needs assessments covered a much broader scope of topics than is attempted in this assessment, and therefore only the results pertinent to this project are included.

For ease in presentation, the findings of the needs assessments are grouped into the following general categories: safety, social skills, supportive school/classroom

environment, academic success, family support/involvement with school, and family

support services. These categories were developed by listing all of the results from each

assessment in one document and then sorting them according to common features. Once

they were sorted a name for each group was chosen. Some of the category names were

borrowed from different needs assessments and others were categories produced by the

task force in the development stage of Lincoln Elementary School's needs assessment.

Specifically, the category "Family support/involvement with school" is a meld of topics

used by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory [AEL] (1988), Barnett and Greenough

(1999), and Walkush and Hagans (1993). The category, "Family Support Services" was

developed from the work of both Romualdi and Sandoval (1995) and Conroy and Mayer

(1994).

This approach was necessary in part due to the large amount of data produced in

the needs assessments that are reviewed here (15 total). In addition, several of the needs

assessments (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1998;

Walkush & Hagans, 1993) included quite a broad range of topics within their categories.

The authors grouped topics differently as well. For example, the Hawaii State DOE's

needs assessment grouped fighting with "school and system environment." Other needs

assessments included fighting within a "social skills" category (Carter et al., 1992;

Walkush & Hagans). Still others called fighting a "safety" issue (Barnett & Greenough;

Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Gerdes & Benson, 1995).

It is intended that presenting the data from all the needs assessments in this review

in this manner will give the reader a clear picture of what school needs assessments are

finding in the areas of safety, social skills, supportive school/classroom environment, academic success, family support/involvement with school, and family support services.

Safety

Only three needs assessments addressed safety directly, and of these, two sought student perspectives on this subject. A number of studies (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Martin, 1990) combined safety issues with topics such as discipline, student relations, school climate, or social skills. For example, the Hawaii State DOE (1999) needs assessment mentions problems with "increasingly unsafe and disruptive student behavior" and a "lack of caring, nurturing, and respectful relations among students" under the topic of school environment, but does not discuss the issues in more detail.

Using a nominal group process approach Gerdes and Benson (1995) assessed the needs of students in an inner city school system. They reported that 80% of students in Grades 7-9 said that security in their school is inadequate. Ninety percent of students in Grades 4-6 reported concern over seeing weapons in the school. A few elementary aged students described fear of being killed as a result of fighting and fear of being shot as primary concerns. Similarly, in Celotta and Jacobs' (1982) study 50% of Kindergarten through sixth-grade students surveyed reported worrying about death and dying.

Students are not alone in their concern over safety. In a Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL] needs assessment, the necessity for measures to reduce acts of violence and harassment on and around school campuses was reported by parents,

teachers, and administrators (NWREL, 1998). The NWREL gathered data in several ways: first, every school board chairman and superintendent, and a random sample of classroom teachers in NWREL's five state region were mailed surveys on which they were asked to rank issues relevant to education and to write in any issues concerning them that were not included in the survey. Second, citizens' opinions were collected via a public telephone survey. Third, the NWREL conducted systematic content analyses on education related articles published in major Northwest newspapers. These analyses provided a means of reviewing educational issues from the perspective of the lay audience. They are also used to identify emerging issues and validate themes identified from other data sources (NWREL). The need for measures to effectively deal with violence in and around schools was identified from these data sources.

Only one study covered other aspects of safety in the school setting. Celotta and Jacobs (1982) found that 55% of elementary students worried about other people stealing their property and 46% worried about people destroying their things. In the same study 13% of students admitted to stealing from fellow students and 9% admitted to destroying other students' property.

It is not clear from the needs assessments available whether or not safety is an issue of concern for schools other than the ones mentioned in the above studies. This may be due to several factors. First, many needs assessments simply did not include safety issues in their assessments. Additionally, many assessments only surveyed adults, supporting Dykeman's (1994) criticism that such needs assessments may be providing only adult conceptualizations of children's needs. Finally, as mentioned earlier, safety

issues may have been considered to be a sub-topic of other issues and therefore, were not directly addressed.

Social Skills

Adults tended to address social skills in broad terms such as "improve student interactions" (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Walkush & Hagans, 1993) and establish classes for helping students get along with each other (Martin, 1990). However, the inability to get along with other students, or lack of respectful behavior among students, was one of the most frequently cited concerns among students as well as parents, teachers, and administrators (Barnett & Greenough; Carter et al., 1992: Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans).

Children were more specific than adults on the topic of getting along. Fifty-four percent of children in Celotta and Jacobs (1982) study said that other students teased them too much, 45% felt like they were left out of activities, and 57% reported worrying what other people think of them. Fighting was the number one concern of 100% of students in Grades 1-6 of an inner-city school (Gerdes & Benson,1995). In the same study students in one of the lower grades gave even more detail. They reported fear of dying as a result of fighting as a primary concern (Gerdes & Benson).

Along a similar line, three studies revealed getting along with siblings as a concern for children (Carter et al., 1992; Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Dolan, 1991). Further, Celotta and Jacobs (1982) showed that 45% of students felt that others got too angry with them. In addition, 45% of the students admitted to getting too angry with other people. In

the Carter et al. assessment, 63% of students stated that they "got mad very easily." The authors did not specify, however, whether children saw getting angry easily as a problem.

Fewer parents in Celotta and Jacobs (1982) assessment reported their children getting angry as problem than students did. Only 21% of parents reported difficulty controlling temper as a problem for their children. Parents in this study were more likely to say that their children had difficulty dealing with bullies (i.e., 33% reported this as a problem).

Children's self-esteem was a subject addressed in some fashion by nearly all the needs assessments. Most studies talked about self esteem as it relates to student motivation to learn (Carter et al., 1992; Gerdes & Benson, 1995; NWREL 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993) and getting along with other students, parents, and teachers (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Celotta & Sobol, 1983, Dolan, 1991).

Students and teachers differed in their opinions regarding whether students lacked self-esteem. In Celotta and Sobol (1983) and Celotta and Jacobs, 50% of teachers said that students need help feeling good about themselves. Students, according to the same study by Celotta and Jacobs, indicated that they liked themselves in general, but lacked confidence in their academic performance. Similarly, Carter et al. (1992) found that students reported "needing more confidence in themselves with regards to speaking up in class, finding out what they are good at doing, and understanding their own interests".

An earlier needs assessment done by Miller (1977) tends to support Celotta and Jacobs' (1982) finding that academic performance is connected to self-esteem as far as girls are concerned. Miller's study, a nation-wide assessment of nine-year-olds, showed

gender differences in what information children use to support their self-evaluations. Girls were more likely to use grades and test scores as well as what others say about them. Boys, on the other hand, were more likely to use personal comparisons and pieces of data (e.g., number of trophies) to support their self-evaluations.

Concern over the ability to communicate effectively was reported by children in two needs assessments (Carter et al., 1992; Celotta & Jacobs, 1982). More specifically 54% of students in one survey reported not being able to say what they want to say to others (Celotta & Jacobs). In Carter et al., students ranked being able to talk to their teachers and be understood and learning to talk with others as their second and third highest priorities, respectively.

Interestingly, teachers, administrators, and parents did not specifically list communication skills as a problem for children in any of the studies. Although it was not made clear in any of the needs assessments, it is possible that adults saw communication skills as part of learning to get along better with their peers. The idea that students might feel frustrated with regard to making themselves understood to the adults in their lives was never mentioned by teachers, administrators or parents. This discrepancy may lend further support to Dykeman's (1994) and Celotta and Sobol's (1983) premise that adults must be careful in assuming that they fully understand children's needs. Celotta and Sobol made the following observation while describing their experience conducting a needs assessment with students, parents, and teachers:

> It was quite apparent...that the three groups had very different ideas about the needs of children. It seemed as if the teachers and parents were by and large primarily concerned about those children's needs which directly affected their

own functioning. Teachers were concerned about those behaviors of children that make it difficult to teach, while parents seemed most concerned with those behaviors that make it difficult to parent. (p. 177)

Children's views differed from those of their parents and teachers in terms of what problems they have with social skills. Students were quite specific about their concerns as they identified being able to talk and make themselves understood to adults, while adults focused on a more broad subject of students' learning to get along with others. Celotta and Sobol's (1983) criticism that adults tend to focus on behaviors that inconvenience them may be justified by the data in these needs assessments.

Supportive School/Classroom Environment

Ten needs assessments listed issues related to improving the school/classroom environment as vital to meeting the academic, social, and developmental needs of children (AEL, 1988; Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Beyer & Smey-Richman, 1988; Carter et al., 1992; Celotta & Jacobs, 1982; Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Gerdes & Benson, 1995; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; Miller, 1977; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993).

Needs assessments conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL, 1998; Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Walkush & Hagans, 1993), AEL (1988), and the Hawaii State DOE (1999) each identified two areas of focus for improving school environments. First is the need for more effective discipline methods, and second is the need for more positive relations between students and their teachers.

The authors of the Hawaii State DOE (1999) needs assessments stated that increasingly disruptive and unsafe behavior among students significantly contributes to an

unhealthy and ineffective learning environment. Teachers responding to the NWREL

needs assessments (NWREL, 1998; Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Walkush & Hagans,

1993) and to Gerdes and Benson's (1995) survey identified ineffective classroom

management and discipline as one of their primary concerns. Many of these teachers

asked for more training in how to meet children's needs with regards to behavior,

discipline, and self-esteem. Teachers also specified that children need help learning to

deal with authority, learning to pay attention to teacher-directed lessons, and following

school/classroom rules (Celotta & Jacobs, 1982; Celotta & Sobol, 1983).

Students in Gerdes and Benson's (1995) assessment also reported that

misbehavior of students made it hard to learn. They defined the major behavior problems

as students using foul language, acting up in class, and disrespecting teachers.

A number of researchers identified the need for improving the relations between

students and teachers (AEL, 1988; Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Hawaii State DOE, 1999;

NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993). Each of these researchers suggested that by

increasing the frequency of positive interactions between students and teachers, the

tensions could begin to be alleviated, thereby increasing desirable behaviors (AEL;

Barnett & Greenough; Hawaii State DOE; NWREL; Walkush & Hagans).

Negative and humiliating interactions were ranked as a major problem by students

in Gerdes and Benson's (1995) needs assessment. Children in their study reported

students showing disrespect for teachers, but also reported feeling disrespected by their

teachers. They stated that students were called names and belittled in front of other

students. They also complained that their teachers did not listen to them. Students in the

Carter et al. (1992) study also said that they wished teachers would "listen to them and understand them more."

Miller (1977) suggested that students may be hesitant to ask their teachers for help. In her study of nine-year-olds, Miller found that only half of students stated that they would ask their teacher for further instructions on how to complete a job. Further, one quarter of students said they would prefer to seek help from another person. Gender and racial differences were also indicated in willingness to ask teachers for help. Girls were more likely to ask for help than boys, and white students were more likely to ask for help than were black students.

Stress was reported as a problem by both students and teachers (Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Celotta & Jacobs, 1982; Gerdes & Benson, 1995). Teachers appeared to attribute student stress to peer pressure (Gerdes & Benson). Students agreed that they experienced pressure from peers, but added that they also experienced pressure from teachers to perform (Celotta & Jacobs; Gerdes & Benson). Sixty percent of students in the Celotta and Jacobs study reported worrying about what their teachers thought of their work and 47% worried about what their parents thought of their schoolwork.

Celotta and Jacobs (1982) also showed that 59% of elementary students worried about changing into the next grade. It appears from these studies that feeling pressured to perform combined with too frequent negative interactions with school personnel has made school feel like an unfriendly place for many students.

Academic Success

Success for all students was a major theme of large-scale needs assessments that surveyed administrators, teachers, and parents (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993). Walkush and Hagans, in particular, pointed out that schools are quite successful at educating children who are of average and above average intelligence, but too often do not meet the needs of students who struggle academically.

Many respondents indicated that there are several groups of students whose needs are not being met. They are: children for whom English is a second language (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Miller, 1977; Walkush & Hagans, 1993), children with learning disabilities or alternative learning styles (Barnett & Greenough; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans), and gifted children (AEL, 1988).

Teachers and administrators in the NWREL assessments (Beyer & Smey-Richman, 1988; Walkush & Hagans, 1993) and the Hawaii State DOE assessment (1999) repeatedly stressed the need for training teachers in alternative teaching methods that would enable them to help students who struggle academically yet still meet the needs of students who do not struggle with schoolwork. Respondents to the AEL (1988) needs assessments expressed concern that there are few or no programs for gifted children, especially in rural areas. Respondents were concerned that gifted children are not challenged by the curriculum and consequently get bored and sometimes become behavior problems for teachers.

A second need identified by teachers and administrators in many of the

assessments was involving students in the learning process or increasing their motivation

to learn (AEL, 1988; Beyer & Smey-Richman, 1988; Celotta & Sobol, 1983; NWREL,

1988; Walkush & Hagans, 1993). Again, teachers and administrators in these

assessments requested more training in methods to increase motivation of students and

involve students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles (AEL; Beyer & Smey-

Richman; Celotta & Sobol; NWREL; Walkush & Hagans).

Again, students' responses differed from and were more specific than the adult

responses. As mentioned earlier, students in the Celotta and Sobol study (1983) seemed

to lack confidence in their academic performance. In their needs assessment 68% percent

of students reported that their greatest concern was doing well on tests. Worrying about

what teachers thought of their work was reported by 60% of students while 47% reported

worrying what their parents thought of their work. Fifty-one percent of students reported

having difficulty understanding how to do their work.

Family Support/Involvement with School

The need to involve parents more in the process of educating their children as well

as increase their support of school programs and policies was stressed by respondents in

six needs assessments (AEL, 1988; Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Beyer & Smey-

Richman, 1988; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1998; Walkush & Hagans, 1993).

The primary group of respondents identifying this need were teachers and school

administrators. In the AEL (1988), Beyer and Smey-Richman (1988), and NWREL

(Barnett & Greenough, 1999) assessments, teachers further identified needing training in

how to more effectively involve parents in the educational process as well as motivate them to work with their children.

Increasing community and family support of school curriculum, programs, and school improvement efforts was identified as a primary need by the AEL (1988), Hawaii State DOE (1999), and the NWREL (1998). Teachers and administrators recognize the fact that without parent involvement and support from people in the community (including those without school age children) even the best programs will lose effectiveness or fail altogether. Several authors pointed out that on a legislative scale, lack support for and involvement with school on behalf of voters eventually translates into reduced funding for education (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Hawaii State DOE; NWREL).

Family Support Services

Family support services, while only one of a number of issues emerging from Walkush and Hagans' needs assessment, was given high priority for receiving intervention measures. Walkush and Hagans (1993) stated:

> Increasingly, schools alone cannot address the problems children are experiencing and bringing to school. Support is needed across the child's home, school, and community. As a response, efforts are increasing to integrate education with human services for providing comprehensive support to children and families. (p. 92)

They were not alone in their conclusions. In an article discussing school-linked services Romualdi and Sandoval (1995) agreed with the above statement saying that schools can not ignore the influence of family and social problems on the learning process. Similarly,

in describing the trend toward site-based management of schools in the future, Streeter and Franklin (1993) stated that not only will schools be providing a greater variety of educational alternatives, but, schools will be providing more complex human services as well.

A number of needs assessments addressed the role of the school counselor in meeting the personal, social, and familial problems faced by students (Conroy & Mayer, 1994; Dolan, 1991; Helms & Ibrahim, 1988; Martin, 1990). These needs assessments investigated what services parents, students, and school personnel think school counselors should provide. Most school personnel, including counselors, rated individual counseling, family counseling, making referrals to family counselors, and enhancing parenting skills in families among their highest priorities (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Conroy & Mayer; Helms & Ibrahim; Martin; NWREL, 1998).

Parents, one the other hand, specified other functions as more important or appropriate for the school counselor. Parents in Helms and Ibrahim (1988) felt that the counselor's main functions should be vocational and career counseling. Conroy and Mayer (1994) found that while parents did show interest in parent education programs (73% and 85% in two elementary schools), the topics they were most interested in were "helping your child succeed in school" and "developing child's gifts and talents" rather than topics related to parenting skills or resolving family conflicts.

Only one study sought student opinion on the role of the school counselor. This needs assessment questioned high school students, but is included here to show that student opinions may be quite different from what one might expect. Dolan (1991) found

that with regards to the role of the school counselor 71% of high school students felt that, "counselors should spend most of their time helping students succeed in school and prepare for work rather than counseling for personal problems, alcohol/drug abuse, or communicating with teachers and parents" (p. 59). For personal problems and career problems students said they would seek advice from friends or parents respectively before seeking help from a counselor (Dolan). Students said this even though they ranked getting along with parents as one of the two most important issues they face (Dolan). Fifty-two percent of students said that career counseling was the most important role of the school counselor (Dolan).

While there appear to be differences of opinion concerning how much schools should be involved with family services, Walkush and Hagans (1993) found that providing access to a broad range of family support services via the school system was linked to student success.

More participants in Barnett and Greenough (1999) expressed interest in school-provided family services than in Conroy and Mayer (1994). Specifically, in the Barnett and Greenough study, 74% of respondents with children under five, 70% of respondents with children 5-18, and 73% of respondents with no children indicated that parenting and adult education classes should be provided at schools. Conroy and Mayer found that only one third of parents with elementary children and one sixth of respondents with middle school children expressed interest in attending classes teaching parenting skills. Any number of factors may have contributed to the seemingly wide disparity of the results of these two studies. For example, the way the questions were asked may influence

responses. Asking if a service should be provided may get quite a different response than asking if you would participate in the service if offered. Also, as mentioned earlier, needs assessments are designed for specific populations and therefore care must be taken in generalizing the results as population differences may exist.

Other family services for which respondents in Barnett and Greenough (1999) showed support were after school programs, mental health counseling, and onsite drug and alcohol treatment (see Table1).

Table 1

Respondents Supporting Family Services Provided in Schools

Services:	No kids	kids > 5 yrs	kids 5-18 yrs.
After school programs	79%	87%	85%
Parenting/adult education classes	73%	74%	73%
Mental health counseling	60%	67%	61%
On-site drug and alcohol treatment	43%	44%	47%

(Barnett & Greenough, 1999)

Those parents showing the most interest in school-linked family services had two demographic characteristics in common. They were more likely to be parents of very young children and more likely to have annual incomes of less than $20,000 (Barnett & Greenough, 1999; Conroy & Mayer, 1994).

In the Conroy and Mayer (1994) assessment, 90% of respondents rated the school as the most convenient place for them to attend parenting classes. This datum appears to

support Romualdi and Sandoval's (1995) position that schools may be a more effective setting for reaching families in need because (1) schools are located throughout communities, (2) they are within walking distance for most families, and (3) they may be perceived as less threatening than other institutions.

Summary

When considering the information presented above, it becomes apparent that schools must deal with highly complex problems and issues about which there may be little agreement. Many of the issues discussed above, such as parenting classes, family conflict, and social skills training, were not considered the domain of school systems in years past. In response to changes in society such as high divorce rates, substance abuse, and gang violence, some school systems have moved toward integrating education with mental health services and family services (Walkush & Hagans, 1993) At best this appears to be a mixed blessing. While programs have been developed to meet the growing needs of students and their families, funding for these types of programs continues to shrink.

For programs to continue receiving funding they must show that they are meeting actual needs of students and worth continuing. The needs assessment has shown itself to be a valuable tool for identifying needs of students and their families.

The Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment is a unique project in that it was the first to be conducted in this community, and was the first wave of a multi-stage needs assessment process. The intention of this project was to identify key issues that parents

and students view as strengths and concerns.

Research Questions

As stated earlier, this is the first wave of the needs assessment process and is exploratory in nature and will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What issues do Lincoln Elementary students and their parents see as concerns, and what issues do they see as strengths?

2. What differences, if any, exist among subgroups of the population? Specifically, the subgroups that will be compared in this study are Caucasian and Latino parents, Caucasian and Latino students, male and female parents, male and female students, and single and married parents.

3. Do students and/or parents consider family counseling services a need or a strength in the community?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

The Lincoln Elementary needs assessment was first initiated by the school

principal and staff. Following guidelines outlined in the literature review regarding

involvement of the public and seeking technical assistance (Hobbs, 1987; Johnson &

Meiller, 1987; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976), a task force

was created that included teachers and the principal from Lincoln Elementary School, the

mayor of Hyrum, Utah, representatives from the local Parent Teacher Association,

parents, the Latino community, Intermountain Health Care [IHC], and Utah State

University Department of Family and Human Development. IHC's interest in this needs

assessment came about via their outreach program. Lincoln Elementary was identified as

an "at-risk" school by the IHC outreach program because the school has a higher

percentage of Latino students among the student body than other schools in the area.

When news of the upcoming needs assessment was received at the outreach program,

IHC officials offered to help fund the cost of the needs assessment and to help with data

analyses. IHC provided funding for printing expenses, the ice cream treat for students,

and researchers employed by the organization conducted the content analyses on open-

ended responses.

This was an exploratory research project intended to identify issues participants

perceive as strengths and/or concerns within the school and community. The task force

not only wanted to collect data that would include opinions of participants, but also hoped

to assure individuals that their opinions were being heard, and that public support of and

involvement with the school would increase (Summers, 1987).

To suit the purposes of this needs assessment the community level survey

approach was chosen. This approach was chosen on the grounds that the instrument can

be customized to collect whatever kind of data is desired, it can be done quickly, and it is

relatively inexpensive to carry out. A survey instrument was developed that was simple

enough in design for both children and adults to complete with ease. It was felt that

having the same instrument for both groups would reduce the risk of confounding

variables. The community level survey approach was well suited for the instrument

flexibility needed, the type of data desired, and the time frame that was available for

carrying out data collection (Johnson & Meiller, 1987; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976).

Sample

Participants in this study were 3rd through 5th grade students of Lincoln

Elementary School in Hyrum, Utah and their parents. Registration records of Lincoln

Elementary School showed the total number of students in the third through fifth grades

to be 260. The exact number of parents was not available, but the number of families was

estimated to be 244. Only one parent response was required for each family so the

estimate was achieved by taking the number of students and subtracting the number of

parents with two or more children in the sample. Of all the adult respondents 16 had

more than one child in the sample. Thus, the resulting estimation of the number of

parents was 244. Because the number of students and parents in this populations was relatively small, the entire population was invited to participate in the survey. According to Johnson and Meiller (1987) when the community is small, attempting to survey 100% of the population rather than taking a random sample is appropriate.

Demographic information taken from the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), showed the ethnic make-up of Hyrum, Utah (8,263 total) to be approximately 86.9% Caucasian, 10.9% Latino, and 2.2% "other." The "other"category included African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Table 2 shows the number of students and parents who participated in the needs assessment. A total of 214 students and 162 parents responded resulting in a return rate of 82.3% for students and 66.4% for parents. These return rates were deemed adequate to proceed with data analyses.

The gender breakdown among students was roughly even. However, among parents far more mothers completed questionnaires than fathers. Mothers responding to the survey represented 82.1% of the adult sample while men represented 17.9%.

Table 2

Summary of Gender and Type of Participants

	Male	Female	Missing value	Total
Students	108	105	1	214
Parents	29	133	0	162

Table 3 shows the average age of men and women participating in the survey as well as the average ages of male and female students who participated. Students' ages ranged from eight to twelve years. Only one student in the sample was 12, the rest were 11 years of age or younger. Parents' ages ranged from 24 to 59 years.

The ethnic make-up of respondents showed that 78.5% of the student sample were Caucasian, 18.7% Latino, and 2.3% identified themselves as "other." These percentages were fairly representative of the percentages reported by the school registration office for the ethnic makeup of the student body. The ethnic makeup of the student body at Lincoln Elementary was 74% Caucasian, 23% Latino, and 3% Other (Administrative Office, Lincoln Elementary, personal communication, March 2000). The percentage of Latinos in the school records and in the sample was between 8 and 13% higher than the percentage of Latinos in Hyrum City that were reported by the Census Bureau (10.9%). One possible explanation for this difference is that the majority of the Latino community is concentrated in one geographic area of Hyrum and this area lies within the boundaries of Lincoln Elementary School. Thus, the proportion

Table 3

Age of Participants

	Male		Female	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Adults	36.1	12.02	35.7	9.89
Children	9.8	.92	9.5	.96

of Latino students among the student body at Lincoln Elementary is greater than in the town itself. Of those students identifying themselves as Caucasian, 39.7% were male and 38.8% were female. Among the Latino group 8.9% were male and 9.3% were female (see Table 4). The ethnic breakdown of parents showed that 79.6% of the adult sample was Caucasian, 17.3% was Latino, and 1.9% identified themselves as "other". Among parents Caucasian mothers represent the largest subgroup. Table 4 shows 66% of adult respondents were Caucasian females. Latino females represented 14.2% of the adult sample while Caucasian and Latino males made up 13.5% and 3.1% of the sample respectively.

Educational levels attained by parents showed that of male respondents 24.1% had completed college, 31% had some college, and 31% had a high school education. Another 10.3% of males had less than a high school education. The same demographic information for female participants showed that 40% had at least some college, 18% had completed college, while 30.8% and 7.5% had a high school education or less than high school education respectively.

Analysis revealed that among adult respondents 84.6% were married and 15.4% were single parents. Table 4 also shows the breakdown of marital status among ethnic groups. This breakdown shows that married, Caucasian women represent the largest portion of the adult sample, followed by married, Caucasian men.

Table 4

Ethnicity, Education, and Marital Status of Participants

	Male		Female	
	n	%	*n*	%
Students:				
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	85	78.7	83	79.0
Latino	19	17.6	20	19.0
other	4	3.7	1	1.0
missing value	0	0	1	0
Adults:				
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	22	75.9	107	80.5
Latino	5	17.2	23	17.3
Other	2	6.9	1	.8
missing value	0	0	2	1.5
Education				
<high school	3	10.3	10	7.5
high school	9	31.0	41	30.8
some college	9	31.0	54	40.6
college graduate	7	24.1	24	18.0
missing value	1	3.4	4	3.0
Marital Status				
Caucasian				
married	18	62.1	97	72.9
single	4	13.8	10	7.5
Latino				
married	4	13.8	16	12.0
single	1	3.4	7	5.3
Other				
married	0	0	0	0
single	2	6.9	1	.8
missing value	0	0	2	1.5

Instrument Development

The assessment instrument used in this project was specifically designed for the Lincoln Elementary school population. Members of the task force met to discuss topics that they believed were important to the well being of the community and successful functioning of the school. From this meeting a list of issues was produced that were reviewed, reformulated, and grouped into four categories: family, literacy, social skills, and school adjustment. Next, various versions of the questionnaire were produced and revised. Because the goal for this wave of the needs assessment was to identify what issues among the four categories were of interest to the participants, a simple two-page questionnaire was developed.

The first page of the questionnaire asked for the following demographic information: gender, age, marital status, level of education, ethnicity, as well as mother's and father's occupations. Two open-ended questions were also included that asked participants what they thought made Hyrum, Utah a good place to live and what their greatest concern was (see Appendix B). These questions were included to stimulate more in-depth answers and to provide an arena for respondents to bring up issues not covered in the questionnaire or considered by the task force.

The demographic sheet with the open-ended questions was placed on top of the questionnaire and stapled to it. The open-ended questions were placed on top of the survey in order to avoid introducing bias into the opinions of respondents by allowing them to see the issues covered on the survey. Johnson and Meiller (1987) strongly

encouraged presenting unstructured or open-ended questions first so as to avoid making

suggestions to or putting words into the mouths of respondents. Along a similar line,

Lusky and Hayes (2001) encouraged the use of instruments that were "sensitive to local

issues and that allow the values of the participants to determine the data to be collected"

(p. 28). Providing open-ended response opportunities and presenting them first were

design features intended to follow these suggestions.

The second page of the questionnaire consisted of two columns with items

relevant to the categories named above listed in each (see Appendix B). The first column

was entitled "Areas of Concern" and the second, "Strengths." Each column of issues was

divided into two sections: School Related issues and Family/Community issues. Beside

each item a blank was placed for participants to check in order to indicate whether this

item was a concern or a strength in the community.

It was conceivable that respondents would consider some items important enough

to mark them as concerns, yet, at the same time, feel that they were being handled well

and would want to mark them as strengths too. This was not deemed problematic

because marking items as both a need and a strength still effectively identified the item as

important to the respondent. Respondents were specifically instructed that they could

mark the same item as both a concern and a strength if they felt this would more

accurately express their sentiments.

At the bottom of each column was a blank with "other" next to it and, in

parentheses, instructions inviting the participant to list any other concerns or strengths.

This was added to encourage respondents to think about and list issues not covered in the

questionnaire.

Because Hyrum, Utah, has a growing Spanish-speaking community, the task force wanted to assure that the needs assessment reflected issues important to this sector of the community and that their opinions were heard. Several steps were taken to increase the participation of the Latino community. First, as mentioned earlier, representatives of this population served on the task force and participated in all phases of instrument development and administration of the needs assessment. Second, the instrument and the informed consent were translated into Spanish by the Spanish-speaking members of the task force. Versions of the needs assessment instrument in Spanish were made available to both students and parents.

The questionnaire was designed to allow subjects from diverse backgrounds to express their opinions, bring up issues not considered by the committee, and identify issues they felt were strengths and/or weaknesses of the school and community. By incorporating guidelines from the literature review and design features suggested by Johnson and Meiller (1987) in the development of this questionnaire, it was hoped to create an instrument that would be sensitive to issues unique to Hyrum, Utah, that would allow the values of the participants determine the data to be collected, and would influence the direction of future waves of the need assessment process (Lusky & Hayes, 2001).

Procedures

Prior approval from Utah State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted before conducting this research project. IRB's are committees formed at all research institutions. Their purpose is to protect human subjects from possible harm or abuses resulting from participation in research projects (Dooley, 1995).

Students at Lincoln Elementary were informed of the upcoming needs assessment survey in advance. A letter was sent home with students one month prior to administering the survey in a Parent Teacher Association newsletter. One week before the survey a note from the principal was sent home with students. Next, they were given a packet that included a letter of informed consent, the demographic sheet, the questionnaire, and an envelope. They were instructed to take this packet home and give it to their parent(s).

Teachers were informed in faculty meetings of the needs assessment and the purposes for which the results would be used. Some were also aware of the project in its initial stages as they participated on the task force and contributed to the development of the survey instrument.

To increase participation from members of the Latino community, parents' meetings were held where a Spanish-speaking liaison explained the purpose of the needs assessment and answered questions. Students who spoke Spanish as their first language were allowed to choose either the Spanish or English version of the questionnaire. These students were given the Spanish version of the instrument to take home to their parents. Teachers ensured that students' whose parents spoke Spanish as their first language

received copies of the questionnaire in Spanish.

The informed consent included a description of the needs assessment, the purpose behind the study, and how the information would be used. It also instructed prospective respondents in how participation was to be handled. Specifically, if parents chose to participate and were willing to allow their children to answer the same questionnaire, they were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided. They were told that returning the questionnaire would constitute their consent to allow their child(ren) to participate in the study.

To increase the likelihood of honest responses, participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. They were instructed not to put their names on the instrument, and for parents, to further insure anonymity, they were asked to seal their questionnaires in the envelope and return it to the school with their child. The students bringing completed surveys back to school were directed to place the sealed envelopes in a box provided in their classrooms. As an incentive to remember to return their parent's completed questionnaires, the children were told that when the administration of the questionnaire was completed an ice cream treat would be given to all of the students. They were also informed that they would receive this treat whether or not they chose to participate in the study.

The informed consent procedure for students was slightly different. Because the topic was of interest to the school district, teachers administered the instrument to all participating children. Teachers instructed students not to put their names on the questionnaires and there would be no information that would enable the researchers to

identify them. Students were reminded that they did not have to participate if they did not wish to and that they would receive the ice cream regardless of their choice. Those not participating were allowed to read in the free reading area of their classroom. In each class the teachers read the following statement to the students prior to administering the questionnaire:

Hyrum City and Lincoln School teachers and administrators are interested in how students view their school and city. You will have the opportunity to answer some questions relating to both your city and school. If you do not want to participate, you may sit and read in the free reading area until the class completes this project. There will be no consequences if you choose not to answer the questions.

Teachers then handed out the questionnaires to the students and allowed them as much time as they needed to complete it. Teachers were given a sheet with general instructions to share with the students. This sheet also contained definitions of some of the survey items that children were likely to have difficulty understanding. Specific definitions of these survey items were discussed and agreed upon by the task force and researchers then included in the instruction sheet for teachers. The entire sheet of instructions is included in Appendix C. Upon completion of the questionnaire each student placed their questionnaire face-down in a box provided in their classroom.

Data Analysis

In order to determine from the data which items on the survey were perceived as strengths or concerns for the participants, frequencies were run on each item for all parents and all students. This information was used in three ways. First, the top ten concerns and strengths among students and parents were determined by selecting those

survey items receiving the ten highest percentages of responses. To identify the top 10 concerns and strengths the percentage of subjects who placed a checkmark next to the item was computed for each item in the strength column and concerns column. The item with the largest percentage of responses was listed as the #1 concern, the item with the second largest percentage was listed as the #2 concern, and so on to the item receiving the tenth largest percentage of responses. The same process was repeated with items in the strengths column. This method of identifying top 10 strengths and concerns was repeated for each subgroup in the sample as well. This ordering of strengths and concerns does not reveal or measure which items the participants felt the most strongly about, it merely reveals what proportion of the sample marked these items.

Second, concerns and strengths were identified using the criterion of having over 50% of any subgroup marking that survey item. Third, differences among subgroups were identified by subjecting the responses to each survey item to a chi-square test.

Parent and student answers to the open-ended questions that were on the first page of the questionnaire were typed verbatim into a single document by the author and given to researchers at Intermountain Health Care (IHC). Responses of both parents and students were analyzed using a standard content analysis procedure where occurrences of words or combinations of words in text are counted and sorted into related groups (Dooley, 1995; Holsti, 1969). The two major categories used in the content analyses were characteristics that make Hyrum, Utah a good place to live, and concerns. Within these two categories the same subcategories were used to code the data that were used in the questionnaire: family, community, school, safety, and literacy. As this study was

exploratory in nature it was anticipated that respondents would list issues that do not fit within these categories. In these cases, multiple occurrences of words or concepts that were related were grouped into new categories. The open-ended questions were the medium through which issues not considered by the task force could surface.

Responses from Spanish-speaking participants were translated into English by a member of the needs assessment task force, then given to the IHC researchers. Thus, open-ended responses from both the Latino and Caucasian communities were included in the analyses. The results of the needs assessment are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the needs assessment are presented below as they answer the research questions outlined in Chapter II. These questions were (1) What issues do Lincoln Elementary students and their parents see as concerns, and what issues do they see as strengths? (2) What differences, if any, exist among subgroups of the population? and (3) Are family counseling services considered a strength or a concern for parents and students participating in this needs assessment?

Research Question #1

To answer the first question the frequency data from all students and all parents participating in the needs assessment was reviewed and the ten concerns and strengths receiving the highest percentages of responses were identified. Table 5 is a list of the top ten concerns and strengths for all students and parents and the percentage of the sample marking each item (for a list of frequencies on each item included in the survey see Tables 21 and 22 in Appendix D). Second, those survey items from subgroup comparisons marked as either a concern or a strength by over 50% of any subgroup are presented.

The first trend that stands out when looking at the frequency data was the high percentages of both parents and students marking items as strengths. Table 5 shows that the items under the "strengths" heading have corresponding percentages that are

Table 5

Top Ten Concerns and Strengths of Parents and Students

	Parents $N = 162$	%	Students $N = 214$	%
		Concerns		
1.	Watch TV	47.4	Enough sleep	53.1
2.	Enough Sleep	38.5	Substance abuse	42.3
3.	Respect for authority	38.5	Child abuse	41.3
4.	Supervision	36.5	Homework	34.7
5.	English/Spanish skills	35.9	Emergency preparedness	28.6
6.	Internet use	34.6	Curfew	28.6
7.	Emergency preparedness	32.7	Bike safety	27.7
8.	Bike safety	32.7	English/Spanish skills	26.3
9.	Substance abuse	31.4	Internet use	25.8
10.	child abuse	30.8	Accelerated Reader Program	24.9
		Strengths		
1.	Accelerated Reader Program	67.3	Friends at school	85.4
2.	Libraries	66.7	Libraries	77.0
3.	Student Education Plan	64.7	Trust school officials	73.2
4.	Trust school officials	59.6	Same age friends	70.9
5.	Friends at school	59.0	Family activities	70.9
6.	Read with family	55.1	Student Education Plan	69.0
7.	Drug Programs	54.6	Respect authority	68.1
8.	Same age friends	51.9	Playground safety	67.6
9.	Parent/teacher involvement	50.6	School safety	67.6
10.	Volunteers/ school programs	49.0	School programs	67.1

between 50 and 85%.

Compiling top 10 lists of concerns for parents and students produced seven survey items in common. They were: children getting enough sleep, substance abuse, child abuse, emergency preparedness, bike safety, English/Spanish skills, and internet use. Examination of Table 5 shows that parents' number one concern, watching TV, was not one shared by the children. Other concerns on the parent list, but not on the children's list were showing respect for authority and supervision of children. The three concerns identified by children that were not in common with parents were homework, the Accelerated Reader Program, and curfew.

The list of top 10 strengths identified by parents and students shows that they identified six of the same survey items. The strengths listed by both groups were friends at school, libraries, trust school officials, same age friends, student education plan, and school programs. The survey items on which parents differed from students were the Accelerated Reader Program, reading with family, parent/teacher involvement, and volunteers. The four strengths identified by students that differed from their parents were family activities, children show respect for authority, playground safety, and school safety.

The second method of answering research question one presents those survey items that were identified as concern or strength by over 50% of any subgroup. This criterion for identifying strengths was included to provide a means for allowing the opinions of subgroups or minority groups such as Latinos and single parents to be heard. This criterion was also chosen on the basis that having over 50% of a subgroup

identifying an issue as a concern or a strength would constitute a majority for that group. Therefore, if the majority of a subgroup marked an item, it was identified as either a strength or a concern.

Each of the survey items included in this needs assessment fell into one of five categories: safety, family, literacy, community, and school. It was noted in the data analyses that the concerns/strengths identified by the subgroups tended to fall into three of these categories: family, safety, and community. Data from the following subgroups is included in this analysis: Caucasian and Latino parents, married and single parents, male and female parents, Caucasian and Latino students, and male and female students.

Caucasian and Latino Parents

Only one item was identified as a concern using the > 50% criterion, but nine were identified as strengths by at least one of the parental subgroups (see Table 6). This comparison yielded two strengths not on the top ten list: Emergency preparedness and children showing respect for authority. Both of these strengths were identified because more than 50% of Latino parents marked them as a strength. A higher percentage of Caucasian parents than Latino parents were concerned over children watching TV. Proportionately more Caucasian parents marked the following items as strengths: read with family, trust school officials (this item included school administrator and teachers), and the Accelerated Reader Program.

Table 6

Parents: Concerns and Strengths by Ethnicity

		Caucasian		Latino	
		$n = 128$	%	$n = 23$	%
		Concerns			
Family	Watch TV	64	50.0	9	39.1
		Strengths			
Family	Read with family	71	57.8	10	43.5
	Respect authority	50	40.6	13	56.5
Community	Libraries	85	67.2	15	65.2
School	Student Education Plan	83	67.2	12	52.2
	Emergency preparedness	33	25.8	12	52.2
	Trust school officials	78	62.5	11	47.8
	Accelerated Reader Pgm.	90	72.7	9	39.1
	Friends at school	73	59.4	13	56.5
	Drug programs	69	55.5	11	47.8

Married and Single Parents

No concerns were identified by married or single parents using the > 50% criterion. In other words, fewer than 50% of the single and married groups marked any single item as a concern. Using this same criterion, seven strengths were identified (see Table 7). Family activities was one strength resulting from this comparison that was not identified on the top 10 list or in previous subgroup comparisons. On five of these strengths the percentages between groups were very similar. They differed on family activities and trust in school officials. A higher proportion of single parents marked family activities as a strength than did their married counterparts. By contrast, a larger

Table 7

Strengths by Marital Status

	Single		Married	
	$n = 25$	%	$n = 135$	%
		Strengths		
Family				
Family activities	13	54.2	56	42.4
School				
Trust school officials	10	41.7	83	62.9
Student Education Plan	16	66.7	85	64.4
Parent/teacher involvement	12	50.0	67	50.8
Friends at school	16	66.7	76	57.6
Same age friends	15	62.5	66	50.0
Drug programs	15	62.5	70	53.0

percentage of married respondents marked trust in school officials as a strength.

Parents by Gender

Parents' data were also analyzed by gender. The criterion of having 50% of fathers or mothers marking an item, revealed only one issue, watching TV, as a concern (see Table 8). Male and female respondents differed by more than 17% with more mothers expressing concern over TV than fathers. Two strengths, recreation and school support, emerged as strengths only when men and women were considered separately. Tables 23 and 24 in Appendix D contain percentages of parent responses to all survey items by ethnicity, marital status, and gender.

Table 8

Parents: Concerns and Strengths by Gender

| | Fathers | | Mothers | |
	$n = 29$	%	$n = 133$	%
	Concerns			
Family				
Watch TV	9	33.3	65	50.4
	Strengths			
Family				
Read with family	18	66.7	68	52.7
Community				
Libraries	21	77.8	83	64.3
Drug programs	12	48.0	68	55.0
School				
Student Education Plan	15	63.0	80	65.1
Trust School Officials	15	63.0	74	60.2
Accelerated Readers Program	15	63.0	84	68.2
Friends at school	14	59.3	72	58.9
Same age friends	13	55.6	62	51.2
School support	13	55.6	55	44.2

Caucasian and Latino Students

In comparing the students by ethnicity one concern, enough sleep, received over

50% response by both the Caucasian and Latino groups (see Table 9). No other concerns

on the survey received over 50% response rate.

All but four items on the survey were marked as strengths by over 50% of

students. The four items not marked as strengths were enough sleep, family counseling

services, parenting classes, and community education.

Four of the strengths identified in this section met the > 50% criterion for the

Caucasian students only. A smaller percentage of Latino students marked curfew, Emergency preparedness, PTA involvement, and drug programs as strengths than Caucasian students (see Table 9). Tables 25 and 26 in Appendix D show student response rates for all survey items by ethnicity and gender.

Students by Gender

Looking at students by gender the responses are much the same as looking at them by ethnicity. Male and female students identified getting enough sleep as the only concern using the > 50% criterion. All of the items except four were marked as strengths. Comparing students answers by gender yielded the same four items not identified as strengths when comparing students by ethnicity. Because the information was so similar in these two comparisons the data was combined in one table (see Table 9).

Table 9 shows that boys and girls differed on several strengths: cultural diversity, Emergency preparedness, homework, and parent/teacher involvement. These items were identified as strengths because in each case well over 60% of girls marked the item. The percentage of boys marking these items as strengths was under 50%.

The third method of answering research question one was accomplished by conducting content analyses on responses to the open-ended questions included in the needs assessment. The questions were, "What makes Hyrum a good place to live," and "What is your most pressing concern?" These questions were included on the first page of the assessment instrument along with the demographic questions.

Table 9

Students: Concerns and Strengths by Ethnicity and Gender

Category	Variable	Caucasian ($n = 168$) %	Latino ($n = 39$) %	Male ($n = 108$) %	Female ($n = 105$) %
			Concerns		
Family	Enough sleep	53.6	52.5	54.6	51.9
			Strengths		
Family	Read with family	63.1	65.0	57.4	68.3
	Supervision	63.7	60.0	56.5	70.2
	Family activities	71.4	57.5	65.7	76.0
	Respect authority	69.6	62.5	61.1	75.0
Community	Libraries	78.6	70.0	73.1	81.7
	Curfew	50.6	35.0	42.6	52.9
	School support	64.9	55.0	58.3	69.2
	Recreation	47.6	52.5	45.4	52.9
	Cultural diversity	53.6	50.0	43.5	62.5
School	School visitor	62.5	57.5	51.9	71.2
	Emergency	63.7	52.5	50.9	74.0
	preparedness	71.4	60.0	63.0	76.0
	Student Ed. Plan	76.8	57.5	69.4	76.9
	Trust school officials	68.5	62.5	55.6	78.8
	School programs	67.3	60.0	59.3	74.0
	Accelerated Reader	53.6	32.5	45.4	52.9
	PTA involvement	53.6	62.5	42.6	69.2
	Homework	57.7	47.5	49.1	62.5
	Parent/teacher invmt.	89.9	70.0	87.0	83.7
	Friends at school	73.8	60.0	67.6	74.0
	Same age friends	70.2	47.5	62.0	70.2
	Drug programs	67.9	65.0	69.4	65.4
Safety	Playground safety	66.7	70.0	58.3	76.9
	School safety	58.3	67.5	53.7	62.5
	Bus safety	54.8	67.5	57.4	56.7
	Bike safety	57.7	57.5	59.3	55.8
Literacy	Internet use	63.1	50.0	55.6	68.3
	Computer skills	59.5	75.0	52.8	72.1

The responses to the first question tend to support the results described above.

Parents' and children's responses were highly similar as can be seen in Table 10.

Children again identified 'friends' as a strength and similarly, they and their parents cited

'friendly people' as a strength. Some of the responses that fell into these

Table 10

Open-ended Response: Strengths of Hyrum

Parents		
Categories	$N = 162$	%
Small Rural	54	33.3
Friendly people/ Good values	42	25.9
Safe/ Low crime	37	22.8
Quiet/ Peaceful	21	12.9
Organized events/ Community activities	16	9.9
School/ Teachers / Principal	14	8.6
Clean	10	6.2
Good place to raise children	8	4.9
Beauty/ Natural surroundings	8	4.9
Other (good housing, good local government, library, local conveniences, etc.)	20	12.3
Children		
Categories	$N = 214$	%
Good friendly people/ friends	50	23.4
Safe/ low crime, gangs / Laws & police	42	19.6
Beautiful/ Clean / Trees / Mountains / Dam, etc	28	13.1
Good school / Principal / Teachers	24	11.2
Small town ambiance (not too crowded, farm & wildlife, space)	23	10.7
Quiet / Peaceful / Not a lot of traffic	20	9.3
Parks / Swimming / Organized sports, etc.	9	4.2

Note. Many responses contained more than one category and not every response is represented by categories.

categories were, "people are nice," "comradery," "people look out for each other," and "good people with good values." Two issues not covered in the survey were identified as strengths. Parents specified that 'Hyrum is a good place to raise children.' Both parents and students identified Hyrum being a small town and the beauty of the area and natural surroundings as strengths. Comments that fell into these categories included the following: "the town is small enough that wherever you go you run into people you know, and everyone looks out for each other" and "Cache Valley is beautiful," "there are recreational opportunities close by such as Hyrum dam and mountains," and "rural living environment"

The second question, "What is your most pressing concern?" drew more varied responses from participants (see Table 11). However, a number of items listed as concerns were also found on the list of strengths (i.e., safety issues, organized events, and school/teachers). Again, the open-ended responses appeared to support the concerns identified earlier. More research into these topics will be required to find out if "problems with English fluency" is related to "English/Spanish skills" identified in the top ten list of concerns for both parents and students. The comments falling into this category all expressed concern that there were too many Spanish-speaking students in classrooms that need extra help from teachers and took too much time away from the rest of the class or were slowing down progress of English-speaking students. Bike safety and school safety are issues also mentioned by both parents and students earlier.

Table 11

Open-Ended Response: Most Pressing Concern

Parents		
Categories	$N = 162$	%
Child's Education (quality, school, teachers, class size, etc.)	39	24.1
School Safety (fighting, drugs, gangs, dress code (for/against)	42	25.9
General safety in community / Crime / Drugs / Gangs	17	10.4
Lack of adult supervision / organized events / recreation in Hyrum		
Growth and crowding issues (city growing too fast)	14	8.6
Integrity of children and society (no values being taught, lack of respect for adults and authority)	11	6.7
Problems with English fluency/ race - especially in school	11	6.7
More school and parent partnership	10	6.1
	6	3.7

Children		
Categories	$N = 214$	%
General safety / Crime	17	7.9
Playground safety / Improvements	15	7.0
Sidewalks (too few, too old, none)	14	6.5
Traffic safety / Pedestrian safety / Bike safety / Crosswalks / Guards	14	6.5
School safety (weapons, drugs, gangs, fights)	12	5.6
Need amenities (Ice rink, parks, skate parks, pool, bike trails)	12	5.6
School performance	11	5.1
Litter and trash	10	4.6
Lunch food complaints/ suggestions	6	2.8
Trouble with family or friends	6	2.8
Growth and crowding	5	2.3
More conveniences, etc. (stores, arcades, restaurants)	5	2.3

Note. Many responses contained more than one category and not every response is represented by categories.

Looking at issues under the heading, safety, reveals that nearly equal percentages of parents and students said that safety of the community/low crime was a strength. A lower but nearly equal percentage of parents and students said they were concerned about the general safety of the community. However, a greater percentage of parents than of students said that they were concerned with safety at school. Some of these comments included concern over growing gangs in the community, gang violence, and drugs. The number of people that identified organized events/recreation as a strength was nearly equal to the number that identified it as a concern. Some respondents praised the number of city-sponsored activities for children and families while others expressed desires for more of these types of activities along with facilities such as an ice skating or roller skating rink, pool, and youth clubs.

Concerns not covered in the needs assessments but identified from open-ended questions were concern over growth of the community and city sidewalks. Concern regarding growth in the community were expressed mainly by parents. Children were the primary group who expressed concern regarding not having sidewalks to walk on or the conditions of existing sidewalks.

In addition to the open-ended questions a category labeled "other" was included at the bottom both the concerns and strengths columns (see survey instrument in appendix B). Participants were invited to write in issues that were not covered on the survey. The results pertaining to this item are presented in Table 12. A small number of participants chose to respond to these items. Those who did respond were parents and in each case, they listed concerns. As can be seen from the table below, three of the items are similar

Table 12

Other Concerns Listed by Parents

Categories:	$N = 162$	%
Education	5	3.0
English fluency/ racial concerns	5	3.0
School safety and school transportation safety	4	2.5
More fine arts/ music education	2	0.6

Note. Many responses contained more than one category and not every response is represented by categories.

to the results described earlier. Music education and fine arts was the only new topic resulting from this question.

Research Question #2

This research question investigated the existence of differences in responses among subgroups in the sample. Differences were identified by subjecting responses of the following subgroups to chi-square tests: parents and students, Caucasian and Latino Parents, married and single parents, fathers and mothers, Caucasian and Latino students, and finally male and female students. To identify differences among groups, chi-square values were required to be significant at the .05 level (i.e., $p < .05$) throughout.

Parents and Students

A greater number of differences existed between parents' and students' responses than among any of the other subgroup comparisons. Table 13 lists those concerns and strengths for which chi-square analyses revealed differences between the responses of

Table 13

Differences Between Parents and Students: Concerns

	χ^2	Parents $(N = 162)$ %	Students $(N = 214)$ %
		Concerns	
School safety	3.85	30.1	20.7
School visitor	4.71	21.2	12.7
Child abuse	5.11	30.8	41.3
English/Spanish skills	3.87	35.9	26.3
Community education	17.64*	24.4	8.5
Student Education Plan	5.58	7.1	15.0
Accelerated Reader Program	6.49	14.1	24.9
Homework	4.626	24.4	34.7
Enough Sleep	7.74*	38.5	53.1
Supervision	22.64*	36.5	15.0
Watch TV	21.05*	47.4	24.4
Friends at school	6.56	17.9	8.9
Respect authority	34.55*	38.5	12.2
Family counseling services	14.63*	20.5	7.0
Substance abuse	4.54	31.4	42.3
Curfew	7.19	16.7	28.6

$p < .05.$ $* p < .01.$ $df = 1.$

students and parents.

The chi-square tests identified differences between parents and students on 21 out of 33 possible strengths (see Table 14). The percentages of children marking items as strengths were consistently higher than the percentages of parents, though more respondents in both groups tended to mark items as strengths than concerns. This trend may be due to the ceiling effect; therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution. This effect will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Table 14

Differences between Parents and Students: Strengths

	χ^2	Parents ($N = 162$) %	Students ($N = 214$) %
		Strengths	
Playground safety	18.09*	45.5	67.6
School safety	21.26*	43.6	67.6
Parenting classes	9.04*	19.2	33.3
Libraries	4.87	66.7	77.0
Internet use	42.45*	23.7	57.7
Computer skills	7.92*	46.8	61.5
English/Spanish skills	47.21*	26.3	62.4
Community education	7.97*	25.0	39.0
Trust school administrator	7.65*	59.6	73.2
School programs	11.85*	49.4	67.1
Homework	6.67	42.3	55.9
Enough sleep	4.50	30.1	40.8
Supervision	42.95*	28.8	63.4
Family activities	26.57*	44.2	70.9
Same age friends	14.64*	51.9	70.9
Respect authority	23.62*	42.9	68.1
Family counseling services	15.44*	23.1	42.7
Drug Programs	4.82	54.5	65.7
Curfew	4.93	35.9	47.4
School support	10.89*	46.2	63.4
Cultural Diversity	9.16*	37.2	53.1

$p < .05.$ * $p < .01.$ $df = 1.$

Some of the items on which differences between students and parents would be expected were parenting classes, community education, family counseling services, and cultural diversity. These issues are ones that children and perhaps many adults may know little about. It was expected that more parents would mark these items as strengths than children rather than the opposite occurring. While more students than parents marked

these items as strengths, compared with other strengths, these received as much as 52%

fewer responses from students than other items in the strengths column. So, while the

results are still inflated toward the positive, it was expected that these would receive far

fewer responses from children than other items, such as "friends" and "same age friends."

Caucasian and Latino Parents

Chi-square tests on parents' responses showed that Caucasian and Latino parents

differed on the following issues: emergency preparedness, the Accelerated Reader

program, and parenting classes (see Table 15). Parenting classes was marked as both a

concern and a strength by larger proportions of Latino parents than Caucasian parents.

Also, a greater percentage of Latino parents marked emergency preparedness as

Table 15

Group Differences: Caucasian and Latino Parents

	χ^2	Caucasian ($n = 129$) %	Latino ($n = 28$) %
		Concerns	
Parenting classes	7.64*	9.4	30.4
		Strengths	
Parenting classes	6.22	16.4	34.8
Emergency preparedness	4.07	25.8	52.2
Accelerated Reader Program	9.10	72.7	39.1

$p < .05.$ * $p < .01.$ $df = 1.$

a strength than did the Caucasian parents. By contrast, nearly 33% more Caucasian than Latino parents said the Accelerated Reader program was a strength.

Caucasian and Latino Students

The chi-square analyses on students' responses by ethnicity yielded three concerns on which students differed. More Latino students than Caucasian students identified emergency preparedness, English/Spanish skills, and Student Education Plan as concerns (see Table 16).

A number of strengths were also identified on which the groups differed. The chi-square analyses revealed that a greater number of Caucasian students identified trust

Table 16

Group Differences: Caucasian and Latino Students

	χ^2	Caucasian ($n = 168$) %	Latino ($n = 39$) %
		Concerns	
Emergency preparedness	6.06	23.8	45.0
English/Spanish skills	4.63	22.0	42.5
Student Education Plan	5.21	11.9	27.5
		Strengths	
Trust school officials	5.43	76.8	57.5
PTA involvement	5.09	53.6	32.5
Friends at School	9.03*	89.9	70.0
Same age friends	4.06	73.8	60.0
Drug programs	5.47	70.2	47.5

$p < .05.$ $* p < .01.$ $df = 1.$

school officials, PTA involvement, friends at school, same age friends, and drug programs as strengths (see Table16).

Married and Single parents

Only one issue was identified using the chi-square analysis on which married and single parents differed, family counseling services (see Table 17). A greater percentage of single parents, 22%, marked family counseling services as a strength than did parents who were married. More single parents marked family counseling services as a strength than did any other adult subgroup.

Table 17

Group Differences: Married and Single Parents

	χ^2	Single ($n = 25$) %	Married ($n = 135$) %
		Strengths	
Family counseling services	5.62	41.7	19.7

$p < .05$. $df = 1$.

Parents by Gender

When subjecting fathers' and mothers' responses to chi-square tests two concerns were identified where men and women differed (see Table 18). First, school visitors were a concern for a greater percentage of fathers than mothers. Second, parenting classes were not marked as a concern by any of the fathers while, 15.4% of mothers considered

Table 18

Group Differences: Fathers and Mothers

	χ^2	Fathers ($n = 29$) %	Mothers ($n = 133$) %
		Concerns	
School visitors	4.20	36.0	17.9
Parenting classes	4.39	0.0	15.4

$p < .05$. $* p < .01$. $df = 1$.

it a concern. There were no strengths on which the percentages of fathers' and mothers' responses differed significantly.

Students by Gender

Boys' and girls' responses were analyzed using chi-square tests as well. This yielded seven concerns on which the two differed: school visitors, libraries, English/Spanish skills, homework, family counseling services, curfew, and recreation (see Table 19). For each of these survey items more boys than girls marked them as a concern. When identifying strengths, however, this trend is reversed with a larger proportion of girls marking each of the items as strengths than boys.

Chi-square tests revealed differences between girls and boys on the issues of school safety, school visitors, emergency preparedness, English/Spanish skills, Student Education Plan, school programs, Accelerated Reader Program, homework, parent teacher involvement, supervision, respect authority, and cultural diversity. All students, girls in particular, identified strengths with a high frequency.

Table 19

Group Differences: Male and Female Students

	χ^2	Male (n =108) %	Female (n = 105) %
		Concerns	
School visitor	6.62*	18.5	6.7
Libraries	8.25*	13.9	2.9
English/Spanish skills	4.06	32.4	20.2
Homework	8.81*	44.4	25.5
Family counseling services	5.45	11.1	2.9
Curfew	5.14	35.2	21.2
Recreation	4.61	28.7	16.3
		Strengths	
School safety	8.34*	58.3	76.9
School visitor	8.86	51.9	71.2
Emergency preparedness	12.50*	50.9	74.0
English/Spanish skills	8.43*	52.8	72.1
Student Education Plan	4.21	63.0	76.0
School programs	12.99*	55.6	78.8
Accelerated Reader program	5.19	59.3	74.0
Homework	15.23*	42.6	69.2
Parent/teacher involvement	3.87	49.1	62.5
Supervision	4.28	56.5	70.2
Respect for authority	4.69	61.1	75.0
Cultural diversity	7.66*	43.6	62.5

$p < .05.$ * $p < .01.$ $df = 1.$

Research Question #3

The third research question investigated whether or not family counseling services would be identified as either a concern or a strength by a significant portion of the sample or by any of the subgroups. Data analyses revealed that family counseling services was not identified on the top ten list of strengths or concerns for parents, students, or any of the subgroups. Neither was it marked as a concern or strength by more than 50% of any subgroup. As can be seen in Table 20, the percentage of parents marking family counseling services as a strength and a concern were nearly equal. An even smaller percentage of students marked family counseling services as a concern and less than 50% marked it as a strength.

More single parents marked family counseling services as a strength than any other parental subgroup. Among students 46% of girls marked this survey item as a strength. Students, girls in particular, tended to mark most items in the strengths column, possibly due to the ceiling effect. This will be discussed further in Chapter V. For specific data on family counseling services according to subgroups refer to Tables 23-26 in Appendix D.

Table 20

Responses to 'Family Counseling Services'

	Concern	Strength
Parents ($N = 162$)	20.0%	23.1%
Students ($N = 214$)	7.0%	42.7%

Those parents who identified family counseling services as a concern had common characteristics. The majority of parents who identified family counseling services as a concern were Caucasian (71.9%), married (84.4%), female (84.3%), between 30 and 48 years of age (81.3%), and had at least some college (62.5%). The profile of adults in this sample who identified family counseling services a concern was married Caucasian females in their thirties and forties who have at least some college education.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

The Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment was the first wave of a needs assessment process that is expected to continue through years to come. A task force made up of school teachers, administrators, local government officials, parents, and business leaders participated in the development and administration of the assessment instrument. The survey instrument contained issues in five areas of interest generated by the task force: Family, community, literacy, school, and safety. Having a task force involved in all phases of the needs assessment was encouraged by several authors (Doherty, 2000; Johnson & Meiller, 1987; Matczynski & Rogus, 1985; U.S. Department of HEW, 1976). Using the task force in the process of instrument development (generating questions/categories) was not unique to this needs assessment. Hawaii State DOE (1999), Martin (1990), Celotta and Jacobs (1982), and Celotta and Sobol (1983) each describe using a task force or steering committee to help create the needs assessment instrument.

The needs assessment survey was administered to students in the third through fifth grades and their parents. Including children in the needs assessment process was encouraged by Dykeman (1994), Celotta and Jacobs (1982), and Celotta and Sobol (1982). Including children in the instrument development and obtaining their opinions through the surveys were ways that these authors believed needs assessments could be

carried out that reflected children's thoughts and ideas directly, instead of merely

obtaining adult conceptualizations of children's needs (Dykeman, 1994). The needs

assessments of Celotta and Jacobs (1982) and Carter et al. (1992) were similar to this

needs assessment in that they compared the answers of parents with students. Several

needs assessments reviewed in Chapter Two included children's views in their needs

assessments (Carter et al.; Celotta & Sobol, 1983; Gerdes & Benson, 1995). It is

interesting to note that of all the needs assessments on children's needs reviewed in the

literature, only four included responses from children. (Carter et al.; Celotta & Sobol,

1983, Gerdes & Benson, and Miller, 1977). Six of the needs assessments included

responses from parents and/or general public (AEL, 1988; Barnett & Greenough, 1999;

Conroy & Mayer, 1994; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; Martin, 1990; NWREL, 1998).

The data resulting from this needs assessment were compared among subgroups

by ethnicity, gender, marital status and between parents and children. With the

exceptions of Miller (1977), who compared students by ethnicity and gender, and Celotta

and Sobol (1983) who compared children, parents, and teachers, no other needs

assessment reviewed in this paper compared their results according to subgroups of the

population.

This needs assessment differed from all of the needs assessments included in the

review in that it was the only project that used broad categories of subject matter with the

intention of identifying areas of focus for the next stage of the needs assessment.

Identifying strengths, or what is working well, in the community is another feature that

was unique to this needs assessment. Of all the needs assessments included in the review

of literature, none included strengths in their results or discussions.

Identifying concerns and strengths in this wave of the needs assessment will allow the needs assessment task force to narrow the focus of the next wave on the issues where more parents and students demonstrated interest: family, community, school. This will help to avoid the problem of "too many goals and a lack of priorities for action resulting in too many initiatives and a lack of focus" (Hawaii State DOE, 1999).

The multi-stage approach to needs assessment process was suggested by the U.S. Department of HEW (1976) in a manual designed to help communities conduct needs assessments. Detailed questions about the issues identified in this assessment can be asked in the next questionnaire to find out more about what makes them concerns or strengths. This project completed the first step in making needs assessments a vital part of the program planning and evaluation process at Lincoln Elementary School.

Research Question #1

The purpose of the first research question was to identify the concerns and strengths using responses of parents and children. This question was answered using the top ten lists, > 50% response, and open-ended questions. One striking thing about the results was how many items were the same for each group. The results of the other needs assessments where parent and student responses were compared showed more differences in the responses of the two groups. This may be the result of other researchers not mentioning similarities in their reports, and other needs assessments used different instruments for parents and students. Celotta and Jacobs (1982) had different instruments

for parents and students and then took items that they thought were most parallel and subjected the responses to chi-square tests. Having identical survey items for both parents and students may have resulted in more similar results. Another possibility is that students naturally would overhear many of their parents' conversations and they may have marked items that they have heard discussed by the adults in their lives.

With the exception of children getting enough sleep and English/Spanish skills, the common concerns identified by parents and children were mainly related to safety issues. It was unexpected that children getting enough sleep was identified as a top concern by the children themselves until it was learned that a short time before administration of the needs assessment students participated in an educational unit where they were taught about protecting and caring for their bodies. This unit included information about child and substance abuse as well as caring for their bodies by getting enough sleep and eating healthy foods. This information also shed light on the number of students marking child abuse and substance abuse as concerns.

The concerns parents identified that were different from their children were children watching TV, children showing respect for authority, and supervision of children. Because these were broad topics, the data cannot reveal what specifically concerned parents about them. However, it may be supposed that these are issues that parents deal with on a daily basis. For example, parents may find it difficult to get children to do homework or chores instead of watching TV. They may also find it difficult to ensure that their children are not watching objectionable programs. This may be particularly salient for parents who are at work when their children get home from

school, thus simultaneously raising concern over being able to supervise their children. Other parents may be concerned about other children not being supervised by adults, demonstrating a lack of respect for authority, and the effect this may have on their own children. These are things that can make parenting a challenge. They may also support Celotta and Sobol's (1983) finding that "parents seemed most concerned about those behaviors that make it difficult to parent" (p. 177).

By contrast, children identified showing respect for authority as one of their top ten strengths. This raises some interesting questions especially when the fact is added that it was mostly Caucasian parents who marked showing respect as a concern. Latino parents, like students, marked this issue as a strength. Questions about this difference might include finding out what behaviors are considered disrespectful by children, by Caucasian parents, and by Latino parents. Further research may reveal cultural differences in what behaviors are considered disrespectful, and or cultural differences in parenting practices that deal with teaching children to show respect for authority.

Students' identified three concerns that were different from their parents' list. Children were concerned about homework, curfew, and the Accelerated Reader Program. These three concerns are interesting in that they were later identified as strengths using the criterion of having over 50% of any group mark the item as such. While this is an interesting result, it is not necessarily surprising as the respondents were instructed that they could mark items as both a concern and a strength.

More questions about curfew are needed to identify reasons behind students marking it as a concern. It could be as simple as children not liking to end the fun of

playing with friends to go home at a specified time. Curfew being identified as a strength

may have been due to the ceiling effect and social desirability. The ceiling effect and

social desirability factors will be discussed later in Limitations.

The data do not tell why students marked homework as a concern. It may be that

they feel that they have too much to do, or that the work they are given is too hard.

Again, more questions are needed to find out why this item was considered a concern.

Further, if concern over homework includes worrying about what teachers and parents

think about their work then Homework being marked as a concern would lend support to

Celotta and Jacobs (1982) and Celotta and Sobol (1983) who found that 40% of children

worried about what parents and teachers thought of their work. The Accelerated Reader

Program was in its first year of use at Lincoln Elementary School when this needs

assessment was undertaken. Students may have felt concern for a number of reasons,

some of which might include lack of understanding of the program, pressure to read

more, pressure to succeed, and worry over taking the tests on books they read. Caucasian

parents identified the Accelerated Reader Program as one of their top ten strengths. They

may have responded positively to this item because they liked the idea of a program that

would encourage their children to read more and improve their reading skills.

Open-ended questions were included in the instrument and were presented first

for the express purpose of collecting information about concerns and strengths that the

task force did not think of, or could not cover because of space and time constraints. The

overall response to the open-ended question, "what is your most pressing concern?" was

high, as 138 out of 162 parents, or 85%, chose to write down at least one concern.

Among the student sample, 159 out of 214 students, or 74% chose to write down at least one concern in response to the open-ended questions. Therefore, while it is understood that this needs assessment could not possibly have gathered all concerns of parents and students, this lack of inclusiveness was at least partially balanced out by the responses to open-ended questions.

Parents' and students' answers to the open-ended questions tended to reinforce their responses to the survey as their responses can easily be grouped into the safety, family, community, and school categories. Responses to the questions indicated that both parents and children were concerned about general safety issues such as fighting at school, crime, and gangs, yet many also indicated that they felt safe and felt that crime was relatively low in Hyrum. Both parents and students expressed satisfaction with their school and the staff of Lincoln Elementary. A small percentage of students (5%) expressed concern with regards to their school performance.

Safety issues identified in this needs assessment had some aspects in common with safety issues cited in the Literature Review. The open-ended questions here mentioned concern regarding drugs, gangs, fighting, and weapons. These types of safety issues were cited by Gerdes and Benson (1995) in their needs assessment of an inner-city school. Children in this needs assessment identified substance abuse and child abuse in their top ten concerns which may be related to their feelings of safety. Safety issues not identified in other needs assessments were bike safety and playground safety. In contrast, students identified playground safety and school safety as strengths.

Parents identified English/Spanish skills as one of their top ten concerns, and in

the open-ended responses they, again, identified concern over fluency in English,

especially in the schools. Some parents indicated in the open-ended questions concern

that their children might not be learning as quickly as they could as a result of their

teachers having to spend more time with Spanish-speaking students. Further research is

warranted to find out if these concerns are justified, that is, are Spanish-speaking students

taking too much of their teacher's time away from the rest of the class? By comparison,

needs assessments conducted by Barnett and Greenough (1999), Miller (1977), O'Malley

(1981), and Walkush and Hagans (1992) found that the needs of children for whom

English is a second language were not getting their academic needs met. Having English-

speaking students' progress delayed because of the presence of ESL students was not

reported in any of these needs assessments.

<div align="center">Research Question #2</div>

In this research question issues were identified on which subgroups of the sample

differed. Subgroup comparisons included parents and students, parents by ethnicity,

students by ethnicity, parents by marital status, parents by gender, and students by gender.

Parents and Students

The comparison of parents and students produced the greatest number of

differences. More students than parents identified substance abuse, child abuse,

homework, Accelerated Reader Program, and Student Education Plan as concerns. Aside

from the teaching unit covering child and substance abuse, children are learning about

these things through the media and programs like D.A.R.E. They are more aware of these social problems and therefore are more likely to identify them as concerns. Children might have marked the Student Education Plan as a concern because they may worry that teachers will tell parents negative things about their behavior or academic performance in school, thereby getting them "in trouble" with their parents. Both homework and Student Education Plan are things that directly affect students, or things they deal with on a regular basis that may not always be pleasant, therefore it is not surprising that they would identify it as a concern.

The chi-square tests revealed that parents and students also differed on 21 out of 33 possible strengths. On each strength where a difference was identified, a greater percentage of children than parents had marked the item. Some of the items on which differences between students and parents would be expected were parenting classes, community education, family counseling services, and cultural diversity. These are issues one could expect that children and many adults would know little about. In fact, the low percentages of parents marking these items as strengths may suggest that more effective means of informing the public about their availability are needed. It was not expected that so many students would mark these items as strengths. As stated in discussing research question #1, this result, too, may have been due to the ceiling effect and/or social desirability.

Caucasian and Latino Parents

When using the chi-square to identify differences between groups, parenting

classes was the only concern on which Caucasian and Latino parents differed with 21% more Latino parents identifying it as a concern. Parenting classes was marked as both a concern and a strength by larger proportions of Latino parents. Approximately equal percentages of Latinos marked parenting classes as a strength and as a concern (30 and 34%, respectively). The percentages are roughly equal to those of Conroy and Mayer (1994) who found that approximately one third of parents with children in elementary school were interested in attending parenting classes. Barnett and Greenough (1999), however, found that 70% of respondents with school-aged children thought that schools should provide parenting classes.

A greater number of Latino than Caucasian parents also identified emergency preparedness as a strength. By contrast, nearly 33% more Caucasian parents identified the Accelerated Reader Program as a strength. These differences are interesting in that they suggest that Latino parents see school related programs as a strength, but issues having to do with reading and parent participation were not seen as strengths. One factor contributing to this result may be that language barriers are making it difficult for Latino parents to read with their children. Even those parents who speak English may find reading with their children challenging. As mentioned earlier, the Accelerated Reader program was new to Lincoln Elementary School. Latino parents may not have seen it as a strength simply because they knew little about it and did not understand its purpose or how it worked.

Caucasian and Latino Students

Three survey items were identified using the chi-square analyses on which students differed by ethnicity: emergency preparedness, English/Spanish skills, and Student Education Plan. In each case a larger proportion of Latino students marked the items as concerns. Although it cannot be determined from this needs assessment why these issues were identified by more Latino students, it would stand to reason that English and Spanish skills would be a more salient issue for many students in this group. Trying to learn English and keep up academically may be a very real concern for Spanish-speaking students. Additionally, the Student Education Plan may be a concern for a number of reasons. Latino students may have difficulty understanding what it is, and if they do understand what it is, they may feel concern over being able to meet the objectives set for them. It may also cause them concern knowing that their parents would have difficulty communicating with their teachers during parent teacher conferences. These differences call for further investigation to find out what concerns Latino students have regarding these issues.

A greater number of Caucasian than Latino students identified trust in school officials, friends at school, same age friends as strengths. These results raise questions that, again, call for further research. For example, do Latino students feel left out by their Caucasian peers? Do they feel that they are treated differently by school staff, or are cultural differences and language barriers contributing to difficulties establishing relationships of trust? For those students who are just learning to speak English, it may be harder for them to express themselves and to understand what is being said by teachers

and other school staff. It would stand to reason that they might feel somewhat alienated from the student body.

Married and Single Parents

Family counseling services was the only survey item on which single and married parents differed. Twenty-two percent more single parents than married parents identified family counseling services as a strength. In fact, more single parents identified this item as a strength than any other subgroup. This suggests that single parents may have had more experience with family counseling services and may be more familiar with what services are available. Another possibility is that, even if they have never used family counseling services, the life experiences of this subgroup (including death of spouse, divorce, problems with children adjusting to changes) may have forced them to consider counseling at some point and to think of it as resource. This is an especially important issue to study further as the answers may be useful in helping to determine if the school system is a potential area for marriage and family therapists to expand their practices.

Parents by Gender

Fathers and mothers differed on only two concerns. They were school visitors and parenting classes. More fathers identified school visitors as a concern than mothers. The survey specifically lists this item as "school visitor check-in," suggesting that there is a standard procedure for checking into the school for people who wish to visit a classroom or individual at the school. The survey does not state what that procedure is. Seeing this item may have sparked interest for fathers in what kind of safety precautions are taken

with regards to school visitors and how strictly they are enforced. More fathers may have marked this item as a result of being less familiar with school procedures as many, if not most, of them would be working during school hours.

It was an interesting result that not one male respondent identified parenting classes as a concern. Only 15% of mothers identified it as a concern, and though the chi-square test showed this to be a significant difference, few in either group considered it a concern. Why it was not marked as a concern by fathers (and mothers) may be that they feel that this resource is readily available if needed, and/or that it was not an important issue to them.

Students by Gender

One of the most noticeable differences between these groups was that for each survey item that the chi-square test identified a difference, more boys identified concerns, while more girls identified strengths. On a number of strengths over 20% more girls marked the items than boys. More boys marked concerns that one might intuitively expect children to mark, such as homework and curfew. Fewer boys marked strengths that one would expected fewer children to identify, such as cultural diversity, parent/teacher involvement, and again, homework. This trend suggests that girls may have been more influenced by social desirability and the ceiling effect than boys.

The subject of homework drew other interesting results. As a concern, nearly 20% fewer girls than boys marked the item. However, 26% more girls identified homework as a strength than boys. The percentages of boys identifying homework as a

strength and a concern were roughly equal. These results raise the question of why there is such a noticeable difference between girls and boys on this subject. The differences could be due to the ceiling effect being stronger for girls, or there may be differences in how boys and girls feel about homework. For example, do more boys dislike homework than girls? Do more boys think there too much homework is given, or that their assignments are too difficult? Another possibility might be that more boys have homework as a result of not completing their work during class time.

Other concerns identified by more boys were recreation, libraries, and family counseling services. Students at Lincoln Elementary are taken on walking field trips in the city where community resources including recreational facilities, libraries, and other community resources are pointed out. As a result, the students in this sample may be more aware of what community resources are available. The percentages of boys marking recreation and libraries as concerns were small, yet the differences between them and girls were enough to reach significance. Some students may have thought that Hyrum still needs more or improved recreational facilities and library facilities. The small percentage of boys who identified family counseling services as a concern is interesting. Perhaps they have had experience with family counseling and either did not like it or would have liked to continue going. Perhaps through media, overhearing parent's conversations, or other sources they were more aware that it exists and marked it as a concern. Recognizing that these are only suppositions, and a myriad of factors could have influenced this result, further study of the issue, family counseling services is needed to find out why it was a concern for this group.

Throughout all subgroup comparisons there were survey items repeatedly surfacing on which the groups differed such as English/Spanish skills, parenting classes, family counseling services, respect for authority, and the Accelerated Reader Program. Overall, the groups tended to have more in common than they had differences. However, the differences between groups provide intriguing areas for future needs assessments to go in identifying needs or strengths.

Research Question #3

This question investigated whether or not family counseling services would be identified as either a need or a strength by the participants. This particular survey item was not identified by parents or students or any of the subgroups as a concern or a strength. Only 20% of parents and 7% of students identified family counseling services as a concern. A pattern emerged, however, in the characteristics of those persons participating in this needs assessment who were interested in family counseling services. Specifically they tended to be married, Caucasian women between the ages of 30 and 48 with at least some college education.

The data collected in this needs assessment can not explain the reasons behind the low response rate to this survey item. Neither can it be assumed that the majority of families in the sample are happy and have no need for family therapy services. Seeking therapy, for many people, may still hold a stigma and they may be reluctant to consider this as an option for dealing with family problems. This result may, however, suggest that marriage and family therapists should focus more of their marketing energies toward

the educational system. Compared with other disciplines such as psychology and social work, marriage and family therapy is a relatively new specialty. It is possible, though the data here can not support or discount, that many parents, educators, and administrators are not aware that marriage and family therapists (MFTs) differ from other mental health professionals in that they have specialized training in working with entire families as well as working with families within the larger systems where they function, such as schools.

Limitations

The Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment was a study designed specifically for this school and the community of Hyrum, Utah. As such it naturally has limitations as to the generalizability of the results. The needs assessment was only given to a select portion of the population: students attending Lincoln Elementary and their parents, and only families with third through fifth-grade students. Lincoln Elementary is the only elementary school in Hyrum, but some Hyrum children attend other schools. Thus, all third through fifth-grade students and parents in Hyrum are not represented. Caution is strongly recommended in trying to apply the results of this needs assessment to other groups, school systems, or communities.

One of the first things that stood out in the results of the Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment was a considerable difference in the percentages of subjects identifying concerns versus strengths of the school and community. A greater number of strengths were identified than concerns and the percentages of persons marking strengths was higher than expected. Many of the items identified as strengths were marked by as

much as 60 to 70% of the adult sample and 60 to 85% of the student sample. This trend remained consistent through all subgroup comparisons.

Having low percentages of responses to concerns and high percentages of responses to strengths may have been influenced by several factors. First, in spite of having input from task force members representing a wide variety of backgrounds, it is possible that the assessment instrument failed to tap into the concerns that the people had. In retrospect, the attempt to identify concerns and strengths in broad categories instead of fine detail, may have contributed to fewer people identifying concerns. It may be that the survey items included in the instrument were too abstract and, consequently, may not have been understood by children and even parents.

This problem could be avoided in future needs assessments by including children in the process of deciding what issues to include on the survey and then pilot testing the survey instrument to allow for identification and adjustment of problem areas. Celotta and Jacobs (1982) did this by asking a random sample of children to write down their three greatest problems, what they would change if they could, and what kind of things they worried about. They used the responses to these questions to formulate the survey items for their needs assessment. They next pilot tested the instrument on another random sample before administering it to the student body.

A second consideration is that the high percentages of respondents, especially children, marking survey items as strengths may have been due to the ceiling effect and/or social desirability. In spite of attempts to control for social desirability by assuring anonymity and by explaining the purpose of the needs assessment, students may still have

considered the survey as a sort of test. Students may have marked more items as strengths thinking that this was a "correct" answer. This may especially be true for survey items that they did not understand. Again, the abstractness of the survey items may have contributed to the high number of responses to the strengths items.

While the percentages of parents marking items as strengths was lower than students, they were still higher than was expected. Contextual factors that may have contributed to this effect for parents were that at the time of administration the local and national economies were strong, there were budget surpluses, and Hyrum was experiencing new growth with businesses coming to the area and homes being built. Another factor that likely influenced both the students and parents' responses was the personality of Lincoln Elementary's principal. He was exceptionally well liked by both the students and their parents. Both groups may have identified more items as strengths as a result of feeling so positively toward the principal because of his connection to the needs assessment (he was part of the task force and letters to parents regarding the needs assessment came from him).

With the limitations of this project in mind, caution should be exercised in interpreting the results of this needs assessment. In spite of the aforementioned limitations this project yielded some interesting results that can both guide the development of the next assessment instrument and provide useful information to Lincoln Elementary School staff and members of the task force.

Project Implications

The concerns and strengths identified in this needs assessment along with differences identified among the subgroups show that there are many issues which it would be beneficial to Lincoln Elementary School and Hyrum city to further investigate. For both parent and students the topics fell into the categories of family, community, and school.

The issues that came up frequently for parents were children watching TV, children showing respect for authority, English and Spanish skills, and trust school administrators and teachers. Intriguing differences existed among parental subgroups that suggest further investigation is in order. Those differences were children showing respect for authority, trust in school officials, and the Accelerated Reader program. A tendency existed for Caucasian parents to identify issues as strengths that were related to reading and parent involvement. Latino parents tended to identify school programs not requiring parental involvement as strengths. The factors contributing to these differences should be explored in the next wave of the needs assessment to find out if Latino parents are more hesitant to get involved with the school, if helping their children with reading and other homework is a problem for them, and whether or not Latino parents perceive these things as problems.

For students the issues surfacing with some frequency were homework, the Accelerated Reader Program, Student Education Plan, trust school officials, substance abuse, and child abuse. Some of these were identified as both concerns and strengths by

students. Group differences also existed on these issues. Finding out the reasons behind these results may provide useful information to school personnel in making programming decisions, curriculum decisions, and dealing with culturally diverse students.

In summary, this needs assessment identified numerous concerns and strengths for parents, students, and subgroups of the sample. Further research into these topics will provide more detailed information as to why they were identified as concerns and/or strengths. This information can be used in the future by school and public officials to make decisions that include consideration of the opinions and perspectives of the people those decisions will affect.

Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists

Family counseling services was not identified as either a strength or a concern by large percentages of subjects participating in the Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment. However, it was an issue on which some subgroups (parents, single parents, male students) differed. Other issues that are of interest to MFTs were identified as strengths or concerns. Some of these issues were parenting classes, school programs child abuse, and substance abuse. The data from this needs assessment do not tell us why these issues were identified as strengths and concerns by the participants. More research is needed to determine whether the factors influencing these results are ones that MFTs can help with. For example, if interest in school programs included subjects such as building social skills, conflict resolution and problems solving, MFTs have the skills necessary to provide these services. In addition, MFTs can offer treatment services,

including parenting classes, to families needing to deal with child abuse and substance abuse.

A number of the needs assessments reviewed in Chapter II included reports that teachers and school counselors have expressed concerns that they are not trained to deal with the problems kids are bringing to school (Amatea & Fabrick, 1984; Gerdes & Benson, 1995; Hawaii State DOE, 1999; NWREL, 1988; Walkush & Hagans, 1992). Some of these authors specified the belief that many of the behavior problems children bring to school stem from problems with substance abuse and child abuse/neglect in the home (Gerdes & Benson; Hawaii State DOE; Walkush & Hagans). The issues discussed above are all subjects with which MFTs are experienced and uniquely trained to deal. These issues affect the family system as well as larger systems of which the family is a part (such as school and community). The implications of these results for family therapists are that their training in systems theory, experience conducting therapy with multiple people in the room, and knowledge of how to include multiple, overlapping systems into the therapy process uniquely qualifies MFTs to offer therapy services to school system. Marriage and family therapists can offer intervention on the family level through therapy, parenting classes, and other psychoeducational groups (such as anger management, conflict resolution, and social skills).

Conroy and Mayer (1994) stated that many school counselors are expected to provide this type of service, but they feel uncomfortable doing so because of a lack of expertise or training in this field, not to mention time constraints. MFTs are trained in and experienced in family processes, teaching parenting skills, and conducting

psychoeducational groups. This is an especially useful and mutually beneficial service that MFTs can offer school systems. This type of relationship between family therapists and the school system could benefit the school counselor by allowing them more treatment options for students who do not respond to individual counseling.

Amatea and Fabrick (1984) described having success in resolving difficult behavioral problems when they referred entire families to a family therapist after individual counseling and parent consultations failed to bring about change. In describing steps to take in referring a family to a family therapist the mention that making the decision to enter therapy is a monumental and stressful decision for many families. This, they stated, represents the family system's natural tendency to "resist changes that prove to stressful" (Amatea & Fabrick). Romualdi and Sandoval (1995) have suggested that if family services were made available within schools, it may be less intimidating to families and the services may be more frequently utilized. Their reasons behind this supposition are that families with children are more comfortable with the schools/school staff in their communities, schools are where the families are, and they are often within walking distance of the family's home (Romualdi & Sandoval). The fact that trust in school officials was marked as a strength by a majority of parents and students lends some degree of support to Romualdi and Sandoval's statement. If families, referred to therapy by their school counselor, were able to receive services at the school, they may feel more comfortable with the process and be more motivated to work with a family therapist. It might be argued, however, that many families would be even less comfortable with family therapy services being offered through the schools because they want to keep

their family affairs private. They might also have concerns about how much information regarding their family issues would be shared with school personnel if the therapist connected with the school system. Further, a therapist's connection with the school may influence families to perceive the therapist as partial to the school's agenda. Whether or not families would feel more comfortable taking advantage of family therapy through their schools needs to be investigated in the next wave of the needs assessment.

Some of parents' greatest concerns were with children watching TV and internet use. While this needs assessment did not identify exactly what concerns parents about these issues, they are of interest to MFTs as they can offer parents help in learning to more effectively set and enforce healthy limits on their children with TV, internet, as well as other activities. Some of the issues identified in the open-ended questions were trouble with family and friends, gangs, and fighting. These behaviors and problems are one that, while other mental health professionals often deal with, family therapists are qualified to work with in family counseling services.

Directions for Future Research

The results of this needs assessment provided many issues for study in the next wave. Several design elements might be implemented to improve the development of an instrument that is appropriate for and reflects the interests of the students and their parents. First, as mentioned in the limitations, including children in the process of generating issues to be included in the needs assessment would help to assure that the issues are ones that are important to children and ones that they are more likely to

understand. Second, the instrument should be pilot tested on both the student and adult populations so that ambiguous wording or other problems might be identified and rectified before the assessment is carried out. Third, the opinions of school teachers and other staff would provide yet another perspective on the concerns and strengths of the school. Their opinions would broaden the scope of understanding provided by the needs assessment. Fourth, more specific questions regarding the pro's and con's of having family therapy services provided in the schools and whether or not families would utilize them are needed to more concretely establish whether or not the school system is a potential setting for MFTs to expand their services.

Recommendations

From the data provided above one can ascertain that the needs of children are not only complex and interrelated, but they have much to do with emotional health and relationships with other people namely peers, teachers, siblings, and parents. Marriage and family therapists are uniquely trained to think and work in terms of the multiple systems that students and their families are involved in. Thus, their skills would be especially valuable when trying to coordinate the treatment of a child with his/her school counselor, parents, social services, and often other institutions. Marriage and family therapists should take steps to market their skills within the educational system.

Barnett and Greenough (1999) and others (Amatea & Fabrick, 1984; Romualdi & Sandoval, 1995; Walkush & Hagans, 1992) have described a trend toward collaborations between schools and mental health/family professionals to provide a more comprehensive

panel of services for children and families. Barnett and Greenough specifically reported teachers asking for help in dealing with dysfunctional families and enhancing the parenting skills of parents.

Amatea and Fabrick (1984), in particular, report that more and more school counselors are referring students and their parents to family therapists to "facilitate a more powerful intervention involving the entire family unit." Testing Romualdi and Sandoval's (1995) statement that therapy services offered in the schools is less intimidating to families would be a useful venture for the field of marriage and family therapy.

MFTs have a broad range of capabilities to offer schools in addition to the expertise in working with family systems. It would seem logical then for MFTs to offer their services to school systems and form mutually beneficial collaborations.

Conclusions

The intentions of the research questions in this study were (1) to identify issues that were considered concerns and/or strengths by parents and students, (2) to identify what issues subgroups of the sample differed on, and (3) to investigate whether or not family counseling services would be considered a concern or strength by participants. The results of the analyses would then be used to focus attention of the next wave of the needs assessment on the issues identified as concerns and strengths as well as on those issues where differences among the subgroups existed.

The first survey question was successfully answered as concerns and strengths

were identified for parents and students and among subgroups of the sample. The survey items that were identified fell into three of the five categories: family, community, and school. Some of the items that surfaced repeatedly in the analyses were children watching TV, children getting enough sleep, children showing respect for authority, supervision of children, English/Spanish skills, Accelerated Reader Program, trust school administrator and teachers, Student Education plan, child abuse, and substance abuse. Some of these items were identified as concerns by one group and strengths by others, such as respect for authority, English/Spanish skills, and the Accelerated Reader Program.

Differences did exist between each subgroup, though some only differed on one or two topics. Many of the issues identified in the first research question were the same ones identified in the second research question where the subgroups differed. Some of the more remarkable topics the subgroups differed on were the Accelerated Reader program, parenting classes, and children showing respect for authority. These differences need to be researched further in the next needs assessment.

Students differed from parents on respect for authority, the Accelerated Reader Program, Student Education Plan, and homework. Students differed by gender and ethnicity on several subjects as well, some of which were: trust school administrator and teachers, homework, and English/Spanish skills. Again, these are areas where more research needs to be conducted.

Family counseling services was not identified not identified as either a concern or a strength by either parents or students in the lists of top ten concerns and strengths. It was not identified as a strength or a concern by more than 50% of any subgroup either.

Significant group differences were found on this survey item between single and married

parents, and male and female students. Forty-one percent of single parents identified it as

a strength, yet the majority of parents who identified family counseling services as a

strength were married, Caucasian women in their thirties and forties who have some

college education. Among students 11% of boys identified it as a concern, while 42% of

girls identified it as a strength. The latter result may have been due to the ceiling effect,

as discussed earlier in this chapter. Further inquiry into this subject in the next needs

assessment may shed more light on the factors influencing the differences among

subgroups.

In spite of some limitations, the Lincoln Elementary School needs assessment

successfully carried out its intended purpose. Concerns and strengths were identified for

students, parents, and subgroups of the sample and differences among the subgroups were

identified. The results of these analyses can be used to provide a guideline for

constructing the next needs assessment, design weaknesses can be avoided in the next

wave, and attention can be focused on those topics that received the greatest number of

responses from participants.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. IRB Letter of Approval

UtahState
UNIVERSITY

March 9, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Scot Allgood
        Tricia Danielson

FROM: True Rubal, IRB Administrator

SUBJECT: Needs and Strengths Assessment at Lincoln Elementary

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval.

In giving its approval, the IRB has determined that:

X   There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
        There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

Appendix B. Needs Assessment Instrument

UtahState
UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent

Needs and Strengths Assessment at Lincoln Elementary- January 2000

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this assessment of Lincoln Elementary School and Hyrum City. There are many programs operated through the school and city designed to help with elementary age children. The perception of these programs is not known, however.

The only way to find out about the strengths and weaknesses of our school and city is to ask both the parents and children. Both groups have a unique perspective and both are valued. All third through fifth grade children and their parents will be given the opportunity to respond. To insure confidentiality, Scot Allgood and Tricia Danielson from Utah State have been asked to do this assessment. Your response is vital as this is the only way we have to determine the things you are concerned about as well as what you think is going well. To encourage the children to remember to return your responses they will be given a small treat for returned questionnaires.

You have the right to stop participating at any time with no consequences. If you choose not to participate, simply do not return the questionnaire. If you decide not to participate, it will not influence your relationship with Lincoln Elementary School, Hyrum City or Utah State University in any way. Your children will also have the choice in whether or not to participate. If they choose not to participate they will be given an alternate task.

The information you provide will be anonymous. Please put the questionnaires in the envelopes that are provided and seal them. By sealing the envelopes your responses will not be seen by either your children or anyone at the school. Your returning the questionnaires implies your permission to ask your children the same exact questions you are asked. The questionnaires will be given to Tricia Danielson and Scot Allgood who will analyze the data. Because there will be no names attached, we will not have any idea who returned their questionnaires. The questionnaires will be kept in a locked file cabinet and at the completion of this study (estimate is March 2000) will then be destroyed. There will be approximately 200 parents and children taking part in this research. Returning the questionnaire constitutes your consent for you and your child to participate.

Your contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. The results will be used by Lincoln Elementary and Hyrum City to better our community. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have. You can reach Scot at 435-753-5895.

Thank you for your assistance.

Tricia Danielson
Tricia Danielson
Student Researcher

Scot M. Allgood
Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

The following information will help us make the most use of the information you mark on the next page. Please mark or fill in the appropriate blank.

1.   Your gender: ___ Male   ___ Female

2.   Your age: _____

3.   Your marital status: ___ Single   ___ Married

4.   Your level of education:
         ___ Less than high school   ___ High School

         ___ Some college   ___ College Graduate

5.   Ethnicity: ___ Caucasian/White ___ Latino   ___ Other

6.   Occupation for mother: _____

                    father: _____

7.   Please write down the one thing that is your most pressing concern:

8.   Please write down the one thing you think makes Hyrum a good place to live:

Below are a number of areas that influence both the school and community. Since you may consider these items to be a concern or a strength in the community, there are two columns. In the first column mark those things you have concerns with. The second column is for those areas you are pleased with, or think are a strength in the school or community. Please go through each column carefully and mark all of the areas that apply.

AREAS OF CONCERN ☹

School Related

___ Playground Safety
___ School Safety
___ Bus Safety
___ Bike Safety
___ School Visitor Check-in
___ Emergency Preparedness
___ Child Abuse
___ Read together with family
___ Libraries
___ Internet
___ Computer Skills
___ English/Spanish Skills
___ Adult and Community Education
___ SEP (Parent Teacher Conference)
___ Trust school teachers and
     administrators
___ School Programs
___ Accelerated Reading

Family & Community

___ PTA Involvement
___ Homework
___ Parent/Teacher Involvement
___ Enough Sleep
___ Family supervision before
     and after school
___ Parenting Classes
___ Watching tv
___ Child has friends at school
___ Child has same age friends
___ Child has respect for authority
___ Counseling services for child or
     family
___ Substance Abuse
     (tobacco/drugs/alcohol)
___ Curfew
___ Support of the School
___ Recreation Opportunities
___ Cultural Diversity

___ Other (Please list any other
concerns)

STRENGTHS ☺

School Related

___ Playground Safety
___ School Safety
___ Bus Safety .
___ Bike Safety
___ School Visitor Check-in
___ Emergency Preparedness
___ Parenting Classes
___ Read together with family
___ Libraries
___ Internet
___ Computer Skills
___ English/Spanish Skills
___ Adult and Community Education
___ SEP (Parent Teacher Conference)
___ Trust school teachers and
     administrators
___ School Programs
___ Accelerated Reading

Family & Community

___ PTA Involvement
___ Homework
___ Parent/Teacher Involvement
___ Enough Sleep
___ Family supervision before
     and after school
___ Family Activities
___ Parents Volunteer at school
___ Child has friends at school
___ Child has same age friends
___ Child has respect for authority
___ Counseling services for child or
     family
___ Drug Prevention Programs
___ Curfew
___ Support of the School
___ Recreation Opportunities
___ Cultural Diversity

___ Other (Please list any other
strengths)

Appendix C: Instruction Sheet for Teachers

General instructions

Under the areas of concern please tell the children that these are the things that they have worried about or that they think aren't working the way that they should be.

Under the areas of strength these are the things that are going well or that they are happy with.

There are specific details for several of the individual items that have specific explanations:

emergency preparedness - knowing what to do in an emergency
child abuse - being abused as they have already learned about
parent/teacher involvement - how much your parents help in the school
libraries - if they ask it is both school and city library
cultural diversity - people with different skin color or from a different religion

there are three items to have them personalize:

child has friends at school - do you have friends at school?
child has same age friends - do you have friends your age?
child has respect for authority - do you respect people in authority like your teachers, principal or policemen?

Thank you for your help in this project. As we talked about in your faculty meeting, this information will be used in the school, by Hyrum City, and by representatives from the Sheriff's department to help improve the coordination and quality of services.

Brad hawkes, Kevan Kennington, and I tried to predict which items would need to be explained so we have consistent explanations for the children. Feel free to answer in your own words specific questions that may arise. You may call Kevan or me for further clarification.

Scot Allgood 753-5895

Appendix D: Tables

Table 21

Parents and Students: Concerns

Variable	Parents	Students
	%	%
Playground safety	22.4	21.6
School safety	30.1	20.7
Bus safety	20.5	21.1
Bike safety	32.7	27.7
School visitor	21.2	12.7
Emergency preparedness	32.7	28.6
Child abuse	30.8	41.3
Read with family	12.8	12.7
Libraries	13.5	8.9
Internet	34.6	25.8
Computer skills	22.4	23.5
English/Spanish skills	35.9	26.3
Community education	24.4	8.5
Student Education Plan	7.1	15.0
Trust school officials	13.5	10.3
School programs	14.7	16.9
Accelerated Reader Program	14.1	24.9
PTA involvment	12.2	9.4
Homework	24.4	34.7
Parent/teacher involvement	21.8	15.0
Enough sleep	38.5	53.1
Supervision	36.5	15.0
Parenting classes	12.2	6.6
Watch TV	47.4	24.4
Friends at school	17.9	8.9
Same age friends	11.5	15.0
Respect authority	38.5	12.2
Family counseling services	20.5	7.0
Substance abuse	31.4	42.3
Curfew	16.7	28.6
School support	10.9	8.9
Recreation	17.3	22.5
Cultural diversity	19.2	13.6

Table 22

Parents and Students: Strengths

Variable	Parents	Students
	%	%
Playground safety	45.5	67.6
School safety	43.6	67.6
Bus safety	30.1	58.2
Bike safety	26.9	57.3
School visitor	33.3	61.5
Emergency preparedness	29.5	62.0
Parenting classes	19.2	33.3
Read with family	55.1	62.9
Libraries	66.7	77.0
Internet	23.7	57.7
Computer skills	46.8	61.5
English/Spanish skills	26.3	62.4
Community education	25.0	39.0
Student Education Plan	64.7	69.0
Trust school officials	59.6	73.2
School programs	49.4	67.1
Accelerated Reader Pgm.	67.3	66.7
PTA involvment	44.2	49.3
Homework	42.3	55.9
Parent/teacher involvement	50.6	55.9
Enough sleep	30.1	40.8
Supervision	28.8	63.4
Family activities	44.2	70.9
Parents volunteer at school	49.4	55.4
Friends at school	59.0	85.4
Same age friends	51.9	70.9
Respect authority	42.9	68.1
Family counseling services	23.1	42.7
Drug Programs	54.5	65.7
Curfew	35.9	47.4
School support	46.2	63.4
Recreation	48.1	49.3
Cultural diversity	37.2	53.1

Table 23

Parent Concerns by Ethnicity, Marital Status, and Gender

Variable	Caucasian Parents	Latino parents	Married	Single	Fathers	Mothers
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Playground safety	23.4	17.4	22.0	25.0	29.6	20.9
School safety	30.5	26.1	28.8	37.5	44.4	27.1
Bus safety	19.5	21.7	21.2	16.7	22.2	20.2
Bike safety	29.7	39.1	31.8	37.5	37.0	31.8
School visitor	20.3	21.7	22.0	16.7	37.0	17.8
Emergency preparedness	32.0	39.1	33.3	29.2	25.9	34.1
Child abuse	29.7	43.5	33.3	16.7	33.3	30.2
Read with family	10.9	17.4	13.6	8.3	11.1	13.2
Libraries	13.3	13.0	13.6	12.5	18.5	12.4
Internet	37.5	26.1	37.1	20.8	33.3	34.9
Computer skills	20.3	34.8	20.5	33.3	14.8	24.0
English/Spanish skills	35.2	43.5	36.4	33.3	25.9	38.0
Community education	24.2	26.1	25.8	16.7	14.8	26.4
Student Educ. Plan	6.3	8.7	7.6	4.2	7.4	7.0
Trust school officials	13.3	4.3	11.4	25.0	14.8	13.2
School programs	12.5	26.1	13.6	20.8	25.9	12.4
Accelerated Reader	12.5	17.4	12.1	25.0	14.8	14.0
PTA involvment	10.9	17.4	11.4	16.7	11.1	12.4
Homework	21.9	34.8	24.2	25.0	18.5	25.6
Parent/teacher involvmt	22.7	17.4	22.0	20.8	25.9	20.9
Enough sleep	39.8	30.4	38.6	37.5	44.4	37.2
Supervision	37.5	34.8	37.9	29.2	33.3	37.0
Parenting classes	9.4	30.4	12.9	8.3	0.0	14.7
Watch TV	50.0	39.1	48.5	41.7	33.3	50.4
Friends at school	18.8	13.0	18.2	16.7	29.6	15.5
Same age friends	10.2	17.4	10.6	16.7	22.2	9.3
Respect authority	39.8	30.4	38.6	37.5	40.7	38.0
Family counseling svc.	18.0	30.4	20.5	20.8	18.5	20.9
Substance abuse	31.3	34.8	33.3	20.8	40.7	29.5
Curfew	16.4	17.4	15.9	20.8	22.2	15.5
School support	9.4	17.4	9.8	16.7	7.4	11.6
Recreation	16.4	17.4	15.9	25.0	22.2	16.3
Cultural diversity	21.1	13.0	20.5	12.5	11.1	20.9

Table 24

Parent Strengths by Ethnicity, Marital Status, and Gender

Variable	Caucasian Parents	Latino parents	Married	Single	Fathers	Mothers
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Playground safety	43.8	52.2	44.7	50.0	44.4	45.7
School safety	43.0	43.5	43.2	45.8	37.0	45.0
Bus safety	31.3	21.7	31.1	25.0	29.6	30.2
Bike safety	27.3	21.7	24.2	41.7	33.3	25.6
School visitor	35.2	21.7	31.1	45.8	33.3	33.3
Emergency preparedness	25.8	52.2	28.0	37.5	37.0	27.9
Parenting classes	16.4	34.8	17.4	29.2	22.2	18.6
Read with family	57.8	43.5	53.8	62.5	66.7	52.7
Libraries	67.2	65.2	66.7	66.7	77.8	64.3
Internet	24.2	21.7	24.2	20.8	25.9	23.3
Computer skills	46.9	43.5	46.2	50.0	51.9	45.7
English/Spanish skills	24.2	39.1	24.2	37.5	29.6	25.6
Community education	22.7	34.8	22.7	37.5	22.2	25.6
Student Educ. Plan	67.2	52.2	64.4	66.7	63.0	65.1
Trust school officials	62.5	47.8	62.9	41.7	63.0	28.9
School programs	50.0	47.8	50.8	41.7	51.9	48.8
Accelerated Reader	72.7	39.1	68.9	58.3	63.0	68.2
PTA involvment	44.5	43.5	43.9	45.8	40.7	45.0
Homework	43.0	39.1	42.4	41.7	48.1	41.1
Parent/teacher involvmt	52.3	43.5	50.8	50.0	44.4	51.9
Enough sleep	28.9	34.8	27.3	45.8	44.4	27.1
Supervision	28.1	34.8	29.5	25.0	40.7	26.4
Family activities	45.3	43.5	42.4	54.2	40.7	45.0
Parents volunteer	51.6	39.1	49.2	50.0	51.9	48.8
Friends at school	59.4	56.5	57.6	50.0	59.3	58.9
Same age friends	50.8	56.5	50.0	66.7	55.6	51.2
Respect authority	40.6	56.5	41.7	62.5	51.9	41.1
Family counseling svc.	20.3	34.8	19.7	50.0	25.9	22.5
Drug programs	55.5	47.8	53.0	41.7	51.9	55.0
Curfew	34.4	43.5	34.8	62.5	33.3	36.4
School support	47.7	39.1	46.2	41.7	55.6	44.2
Recreation	49.2	43.5	48.5	45.8	44.4	48.8
Cultural diversity	35.9	43.5	35.6	45.8	33.3	38.0

Table 25

Student Concerns by Ethnicity and Gender

Variable	Caucasian students %	Latino Students %	Boys %	Girls %
Playground safety	21.8	24.1	20.4	23.1
School safety	12.1	13.8	25.9	15.4
Bus safety	22.4	17.2	16.7	26.0
Bike safety	29.5	20.7	27.8	27.9
School visitor	12.2	13.8	18.5	6.7
Emergency preparedness	25.6	48.3	32.4	24.0
Child abuse	42.3	37.9	35.2	48.1
Read with family	14.1	17.2	13.9	11.5
Libraries	9.0	6.9	13.9	2.9
Internet	27.6	20.7	25.9	26.0
Computer skills	20.5	20.7	25.0	21.2
English/Spanish skills	22.4	41.4	32.4	20.2
Community education	8.3	13.8	9.3	6.7
Student Education Plan	11.5	27.6	14.8	14.4
Trust school officials	9.0	13.8	13.0	7.7
School programs	15.4	24.1	21.3	12.5
Accelerated Reader	22.4	31.0	26.9	23.1
PTA involvment	10.9	6.9	9.3	9.6
Homework	34.0	48.3	44.4	25.0
Parent/teacher involvement	14.1	24.1	18.5	11.5
Enough sleep	52.6	55.2	54.6	51.9
Supervision	13.5	24.1	16.7	13.5
Parenting classes	8.3	0.0	9.3	3.8
Watch TV	22.4	31.0	21.3	27.9
Friends at school	8.3	13.8	6.5	11.5
Same age friends	13.5	13.8	18.5	11.5
Respect authority	10.9	24.1	13.9	10.6
Family counseling svc.	7.1	10.3	11.1	2.9
Substance abuse	41.0	48.3	43.5	40.4
Curfew	28.8	24.1	35.2	21.2
School support	7.1	13.8	9.3	7.7
Recreation	21.2	27.6	28.7	16.3
Cultural diversity	12.8	10.3	19.4	7.7

Table 26

Student Strengths by Ethnicity and Gender

Variable	Caucasian students	Latino Students	Boys	Girls
	%	%	%	%
Playground safety	69.2	62.1	69.4	65.4
School safety	67.9	69.0	58.3	76.9
Bus safety	58.3	69.0	53.7	62.5
Bike safety	54.5	62.1	57.4	56.7
School visitor	62.2	51.7	51.9	71.2
Emergency preparedness	62.8	44.8	50.9	74.0
Parenting classes	37.2	24.1	30.6	35.6
Read with family	63.5	65.5	57.4	68.3
Libraries	80.1	72.4	73.1	81.7
Internet	60.9	51.7	59.3	55.8
Computer skills	65.4	55.2	55.6	68.3
English/Spanish skills	60.9	69.0	52.8	72.1
Community education	46.2	27.6	40.7	37.5
Student Education Plan	73.1	65.5	63.0	76.0
Trust school officials	78.8	58.6	69.4	76.9
School programs	69.2	58.6	55.6	78.8
Accelerated Reader	69.9	58.6	59.3	74.0
PTA involvment	53.8	31.0	45.4	52.9
Homework	53.8	58.6	42.6	69.2
Parent/teacher involvement	57.7	55.2	49.1	62.5
Enough sleep	42.9	31.0	34.3	47.1
Supervision	65.4	55.2	56.5	70.2
Family activities	71.2	65.5	65.7	76.0
Parents volunteer at school	59.6	41.4	50.9	59.6
Friends at School	89.7	69.0	87.0	83.7
Same age friends	73.7	55.2	67.6	74.0
Respect authority	72.4	58.6	61.1	75.0
Family counseling services	46.8	41.4	38.9	46.2
Drug programs	70.5	48.3	62.0	70.2
Curfew	51.3	34.5	42.6	52.9
School support	67.3	58.6	58.3	69.2
Recreation	48.1	51.7	45.4	52.9
Cultural diversity	55.8	48.3	43.5	62.5