Encouraging Navajo Parents' Involvement In Their Children's Education

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ENCOURAGING NAVAJO PARENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

by

Wanda Benale

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Department of Psychology

Plan B

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1990
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ABSTRACT

Encouraging Navajo Parents' Involvement
In Their Children's Education

by

Wanda Benale

Utah State University, 1990

Major Professor: Elwin Nielsen, Ph.D.
Department: Psychology

The transition of Navajo Indian children from boarding schools to public schools has brought about the challenge of involving parents in their children's education. These people have previously been accustomed to having the education of their children left to the distant schools, with little opportunity for parental involvement. As a consequence, it is often difficult to get these parents to accept the schools' invitations to participate in conferences and other activities when parental involvement is important.

This study reviewed all of the reports that could be found of programs involving Indians and non-Indian parents in their children's education. These programs were discussed with reference to their applicability to Navajo culture and the geography of the reservation. Suggestions and guidelines were offered for using various parts of these programs with Navajo Indian parents.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States, programs are being implemented by school systems to encourage more parent and community involvement in the public schools. Little is known about how to encourage Navajo parent involvement in the education of their children. This is due, in part, to the fact that a large majority of the parents who have had any schooling received their education in boarding schools. Because these schools were located many miles from their homes, parental participation of any kind was not encouraged. In most areas on the Navajo Reservation, public schools are relatively new. No research on Navajo parent involvement could be located through a computer search.

In the late nineteenth century, the Bureau of Indian Affairs became involved in Indian education when the United States government accepted the responsibility for educating Native Americans (Szasz, 1977). This action placed the concept of total care and responsibility of school children on the reservation schools. Presently, the government boarding schools are being phased out and public schools are becoming the primary place of instruction, with children coming from their homes on a daily basis. The transition from boarding to public schools has created problems in putting emphasis on the daily care of the school children by
the parents. Consequently, the preconceived notion about the government taking full responsibility of the Navajo children is being challenged.

In 1985, an elementary school was established on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona. The present author is focusing on this particular school because it is located in a remote region of Navajo land. The facilities originally provided for 500 plus Navajo students, including kindergarten through the ninth grade. The school continues to grow and will thus have a larger number of students in future years.

The school system provides a similar set of curricula to that of other reservation schools and has certified staff members. It serves the children who live within a fifty-mile radius of the school and these students ride the buses or are brought in by their parents daily. Approximately eighty percent of the children ride the buses to and from school.

The problem of having Navajo parents involved with their children's education is becoming evident in this school. The kindergarten through third grade teachers recognize the importance of the sharing of information between teacher and parent, therefore, parent and teacher conferences are scheduled three times periodically throughout the year for parents of these children. The goal is to have a fifteen to thirty minute conference with each
parent three times a year. The school also has an open door policy to whomever wants to visit the classroom, especially the parents. In order to keep the parents informed of the children's progress in school, notes are sent out whenever the need arises.

An informal survey by the kindergarten teacher indicated that only one percent of the parents who had children in this school could not read English, and in this particular family, there were older children who could read the school notices.

Problem Statement

There are problems relative to getting Navajo parents involved in the schooling of their children. Even though parents are requested to attend parent and teacher conferences, they very often do not keep the appointments. Too often parents respond to warnings from the school only when there is a problem concerning their children. Moreover, parents whose children experience the most difficulty in school seem to be the most reluctant to see their children's teachers, even when the child is being threatened with suspension.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify methods used by Indian and non-Indian school systems to involve parents in the schooling of their children and to adapt these
methods into proposed ways of involving Navajo parents or parent substitutes as partners with teachers in the total education of young Navajo children. Suggestions will be given for use with Navajo parents.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the larger society of the United States, there has been a growing awareness of the need for having parents contribute to the child's education. Consequently, there has been a recent increase in interest on the part of both teachers and parents in having parents involved in the educational process. This seems to happen regardless of whether the child was in formal child care, a school system, or in the primary care of parents. There is a growing awareness of the basic and critical nature of parent involvement to produce healthy, happy, and active child-learners (Yawkey, 1974).

Public Law 99-457, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, Part H, directs states "to develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency program of early intervention services for handicapped infants and toddlers and their families" (Section 671(b)) (Johnson, McGonigel, & Kaufmann, 1989). The first trend concerning the growth of this idea and research led to the parent-centered early intervention programs of the early middle sixties (Honig, 1979). A finding regarding early intervention models was the "dissipation of intervention effects where parents weren't involved" (Honig, 1979), resulting in a failure to maintain cognitive gains where parent involvement was minimum.
regardless of the theoretical orientation of curricular format of the program.

Shaefer’s (1972) tutorial at-home-model with low-income Washington, D.C. infants, follow-through programs such as Berieter-Englemann’s model (1977) and pattern-drill lessons from Caldwell’s (1965) omnibus day-care program demonstrated impressive cognitive gains, only to have these gains decline later. The failure of early-intervention programs to maintain the initial gains experienced by children, illustrated the need for parental support. In order to maintain the child’s learning success, it was decided that parent support and involvement were necessary to sustain the school’s accomplishment (Honig, 1979).

As a result of this early experience, Shaefer (1972) emphasized the need for the early development of skills in the home so that the child can later function in the classroom. At first he didn’t include parents in his methodology. Later he had learned from the mistakes made in his parent-focused home-tutoring program and cautioned that educators should not work with children alone since it invites failure and frustration (Shaefer, 1972).

Much other research has shown the importance of parental influence on children’s learning. This influence includes cultural and family factors that sometimes affect
the child-parent interactions and the way parents teach their children. Olmstead and Jester (1972) analyzed maternal-child interaction to discover the dimensions in which they differ. For example, middle-socioeconomic class parents provided more organized information to clarify their statements, more detailed instructions for learning tasks and more verbal explanations or reasons for correcting a child's response. Low-income mothers used controls such as threats or physical restraints to correct children.

Milner (1951) found in his interviews with mothers and children that children who scored higher on language tests were read to more often, had more mealtime conversation with parents, received less harsh physical punishment, and were from middle-socioeconomic class families. In Gordon's (1969) home visitation project, the amount of conversation in the home, especially that directed toward the child, related significantly to the child's performance on developmental tests, and proved to be more important than their low-income socioeconomic class status.

Shaefer's (1972) review of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies indicated that the intellectual facilitation provided by the parents correlated higher with intelligence and achievement than with socioeconomic status. Schaefer's studies showed that when the socioeconomic level of the family was controlled, the "children's test scores
were much more related to degree of parent interest than to variations in the quality of the schools" (Shaefer, 1972).

Zigler (1970) has analyzed how important familial and cultural experiences are to a child's educational achievement and emotional system.

First, a well-documented phenomenon is that children who do not receive enough affection and attention from the important adults in their life suffer in later years from an atypically high need for such attention and affection. When faced with cognitive tasks, such children do not appear highly motivated to be involved with the intellectual problems confronting them but rather use their interactions with adults to satisfy hunger for attention, affection, and yes, as unscientific as it may be, their need for love. We have studies of children who were socially deprived in the first few years of life and we still find the effects of the early deprivation experience some ten years later.

Note the problem that such children present to their teachers. Instead of attending to a curriculum task and solving it, the child may whine and ask the teacher to solve the task for him. The teacher tuned in only to the cognitive aspects of the situation concludes the child is unintelligent. On the other hand, the teacher who realizes how depriving experiences spell themselves out in the motivational structure of the child may more correctly conclude that what is interfering with the child's performance is his need for a positive interaction with an adult. If the child's emotional needs and there is an attempt to satisfy that need, it would not be surprising to see the child then to go to a better school performance (p. 410).

Zigler (1970) maintains that the basis of a child's education stems from the interaction of the child with his environment. Interaction with the environment is not merely important to the child in the classroom during the school day, but also determines to a great degree his whole
lifetime and his whole life space and how they contribute to his education. Interaction and transaction of the child with his environment are the basis of both his socialization and education. Interaction and transaction must be promoted throughout the child's lifetime and in primary social interaction.

Involvement of Parents in Early Childhood Education Programs

There are several ways reported in the literature in which parents are being involved in early childhood programs. Most of the parenting programs are connected to child care programs. The majority of the programs are federally-supported and are aimed at young minority parents, Black, Hispanic, and Asian, who are at the low end of the socioeconomic scales.

These programs are set up for parents who, because of low economic circumstances, need to develop skills for enhancing the cognitive and motor abilities of their "high risk in education and health" children (Drescher, 1968). Some programs are aimed at improving the parent's own economic and educational conditions through basic education training. The majority of the programs are home based, with some group training designed to promote and improve family conditions. In each of the programs, evaluation efforts are based upon a descriptive interpretation of the program and the perceived responsiveness of its participant.
The parenting programs exist in several different models. There are two basic types of educational programs. There are also programs which emphasize vocational training. One of the educational types of program responds to parents' need for skills and knowledge in areas like reading and English (Shields, 1978), while the others teach strategies in promoting language, motor, and cognitive development in children. (Lamb & Wosley, 1978). These types of programs train mothers within a school setting to work in a classroom, or they train mothers to work with their children at home.

Lamb and Wosley (1978) described techniques including:

1. Teaching mothers how to observe behavior in a classroom which they could eventually use at home as well.
2. Teaching mothers how to teach at school.
4. Using toys to teach important concepts such as colors, shapes, and vocabulary.
5. Showing mothers through video tape, role playing, and demonstration on how to praise, encourage, and reward.
6. Using mothers to train mothers.
PARENTING PROGRAMS

Mother-Child Home Program

One example of the first type of education program is the Mother-Child Home Program (MCHP) developed and researched by the Verbal Interaction Project directed by Phyllis Levenstein (Levenstein, 1977). The MCHP was one of the earliest efforts to provide home-based services to parents utilizing a home visitor.

The general goal of the MCHP program is to prevent educational disadvantage in young children. The program seeks to prepare children both intellectually and socially for the school experience while enhancing the quality of family life. The main method for achieving this goal is to encourage verbal and social interaction between child and parent, and between families and child.

According to Levenstein (1977), a child is mainly dependent upon the interaction that occurs between himself and his care giver for verbal development and rapid language development between ages two and four. Therefore, the theoretical base of the program is the concept that cognitive growth can be enhanced and encouraged by stimulating the child's language development. The basis for verbal interaction between parent and child is the Verbal Interaction Stimulus Material (VISM). The VISM are commercially available toys and books selected according to
the list of criteria developed by the project. An example of the material is a hammer and wooden peg benches and book.

The program of services is delivered by toy demonstrators, who are individuals interested in working with children. There are two groups who serve as the toy demonstrators: one group is composed of paid volunteers, usually parents who are eligible for low-income assistance; the other group consisted of volunteer students not eligible for low-income classification. The toy demonstrators received intensive training prior to and during the home visitation process.

The caseload for a home visitor is between one and ten families. Each home visitor visits each family twice a week with sessions lasting approximately one-half hour. During the first of the two weekly visits, the home visitor introduces a toy or book to the parent and child. The next week consists of review, follow-up, and reinforcement sessions relating to the materials used.

Each toy demonstrator follows a guide sheet that outlines an abbreviated curriculum and outlines the methods, procedures, and suggestions for using the material. This material is left with the family. The toy demonstrator models verbal interactions and encourages the parent to become involved with the child using the VISM as a means of promoting verbal stimulation. Although the toy demonstrator does no: "teach", he or she guides and directs the mother
to become involved with the child through VISM and other materials.

The process that provides the basis for interaction between mother and child is the child's play encouraged by VISM. Under the demonstrator's guidance and encouragement, the mother learns by practicing the methods and skills of encouraging, soliciting and extending the child's conversation.

The two types of VISM stimulus materials are introduced into the homes on alternate weeks, one week a toy and a book the next week. In this way the child has eleven toys and twelve books by the end of a year's participation.

Unique features of the MCHP are as follows:

(1) Having been given and taught the skills necessary for verbal stimulation and interaction, the parent functions in a special verbal relationship with the child.

(2) It addresses only one specific area of verbal stimulation; the service is not spread too thin.

(3) The program philosophy is that it is not always necessary or desirable to have homemade or project designed materials; using commercially available toys and books can be useful.

(4) Role modeling and immediate involvement provide parents with skills they can use repeatedly.
(5) The toys and books are left permanently with the families; whereas in other programs, toys and books are for loan.

Behavioral Analysis

An example of the second type of educational program is Behavioral Analysis which emphasizes the environmental influences on learning and social settings of learning (Bushell, 1971).

Goals of the Behavioral Analysis are: (1) training in observational skills and assessment; (2) formal training in learning theory concepts; (3) application of these concepts to their children; and, (4) evaluation. In this model, the parent chooses a particular behavior to correct, observes occurrence, analyzes the environment in which the behavior most often occurs, and uses proper reinforcement. The goals are fulfilled through didactic instruction, role playing, modeling, cueing, contingency contracting, and videotape feedback.

The key concept of Behavior Analysis model is that by using positive reinforcement, teachers can change children's behavior. If one manipulates the environment properly, children will engage in "appropriate" learning behaviors.

In Behavior Analysis, there should be a clearly established goal before one attempts to modify behavior. Once the objectives are established, the children proceed with their programmed work books. The children move step-
by-step and are reinforced each step along the way and receive immediate feedback regardless of whether answers are right or wrong. Tokens are given by teachers in order to motivate the children in appropriate behavior.

To capitalize on the gains of Head Start, the Hopi Tribal Council adopted the Follow Through Program (FTP) (Bushell, 1971) in 1968 and it lasted until 1972. It was based on the Behavior Analysis approach, from the University of Kansas.

Program objectives were:

1. To build proficiency in basic academic and social skills necessary for the child to succeed in school.
2. To maintain a high level of student motivation the positive reinforcement of desired learning behavior.
3. To provide individualized instruction and effective criteria to measure successful performance.
4. To unite professional educators, paraprofessionals, and parents in the teaching process.

Prior to the introduction of FTP, the Hopi had no official means of controlling the educational policies and practices in the schools serving their children. The FTP was mandated to control the educational policies which affected their children and also to involve parents in the process of education.

The basic research methodology consisted of participant observation by an FTP research assistant. In a series of
visits to the Hopi reservation between May 1970 and July 1973, the research assistant conducted interviews with educators, leaders, and parents who had children in the FTP. In these interviews specific questions were asked regarding parental attitudes of schooling of their children.

In each instance the approach was the same. The research assistant met with the school's staff and explained the nature of the research and the procedures. Several aides were chosen by their community to work with FTP, and two paid parent aides participated in the actual instruction in the classrooms. Aides served for a ten-week period that overlapped in order to facilitate the training of the next parent aides.

The FTP Behavior Analysis model placed special emphasis on individual instruction. The rationale was that children would not be working at the same rate. Individualized instruction allowed the child to work at his own rate. This system also eliminated competition. Each child competed only with himself. Each parent took supervised charge of a group of four to five students; they were engaged in dispensing reinforcement tokens to the students. The parents did not give instructions or lessons. Each school had a parent coordinator who visited parents to explain the program and help supervise parents in the classroom.

The program is designed by a sponsor to modify the traditional procedures of BIA schools. A new model of
education was introduced and the parents were placed in teaching positions. The objectives were met; it brought a lot of parents into the classroom as Teacher’s Aides. It also highlighted two important concepts: 1) parents have a right to be involved in the school; and 2) parents are considered competent to take on actual teachings.

The FTP created an expectation of involvement among the parents. The program also provided the kind of academic program the Hopi wanted.

Results of the Parent Training were mixed. Career opportunities and a feeling of partnership between the school and community and career opportunities were created. The Kansas sponsor carried out continuous inservice and evaluation. The local trainers and Kansas advisors conducted classroom observation, training schedule workshops, and interviews throughout the research. As a result of the interviews, a summary of how Hopi parents viewed their schools was developed.

An Anglo institution is where the Hopi send their children to learn the "White man’s ways". It was a positive institution where they learn things that are useful to them.

The Hopi expects a lot from the school. They want their children to learn language (English) and academic skills so they can function in a dominant society. The Hopi resist innovations aimed at incorporating elements of Hopi culture into the school. They feel that the person
trying to teach it doesn’t know enough and, therefore it should be done at home.

The Hopi also have an image of a teacher as a professional. The Hopi view reflects the feeling that since the teachers and the professionals are experts, they should be the ones to make educational decisions not the parents.

Child and Family Resource Program

There is a different kind of parent training method which emphasizes Vocational Training. It aims to increase employment and ultimately raise the economic quality of family life. The Child and Family Resource Program (CFRP), in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, is an example of a program emphasizing vocational training (O’Keefe, 1975).

CFRP is part of the national Head Start demonstration program funded by the federal government for working with parents, children, and families. The CFRP is a child-centered family service program designed to provide family support services that are important for, and directly related to maintaining healthy growth and development of children from the prenatal period through age eight.

CFRP is a component of the already existing Head Start program and builds upon the services and programs currently offered by it.

The national objectives for CFRP’s are as follows:

1. To individualize and tailor programs and services to children and their families.
2. To link resources in the community so that families may choose from a variety of programs and services while relating primarily to a single resource center for all young children in the same family.

3. To provide continuity of resources available to parents, enabling each family to guide the development of its children from the prenatal period through their early school years.

4. To enhance and build upon the strengths of the individual family as a child-rearing system, with distinct values, culture, and aspirations. The CFRP will attempt to reinforce these strengths, treating each individual as a whole and the family as a unit.

Head Start emphasizes the delivery of services to children between three and five in center-based programs; whereas the CFRP seeks to provide services to families. Since the delivery services are focused on the family, a careful and thorough analysis of the family needs and goals are conducted prior to working with the family. This assessment is the key to successful family involvement. The prior family assessment permits and encourages individual planning for each family.

The assessment process is ongoing and continuous in CFRP. The basic premises of CFRP is that it is the family to whom services can and should be delivered. The delivery of services through the family supports the family as a
basic social institution by recognizing and reinforcing the family's role as a primary educator and supporter of its members.

The CFRP in St. Petersburg, Florida provides services in the urban setting to 137 families and 249 children (D.H.E.W., 1975). The majority of families enrolled in this program are considered low-income families.

The majority of the CFRP services are provided through the following:

1. Home visitors;
2. Contract services provided by other agencies;
3. Parent/Child centers;
4. Dissemination of information through the media and local program printed materials.

The basis of the St. Petersburg services is the family recruitment and assessment process and the delivery of service designed for the family based on the analysis. Without prior family analysis, there would be no real understanding of the family and the services they need. The process for family recruitment, intake, and analysis are as follows:

1. Identification of eligible families.
2. Orientation at the program, goals, objectives, and procedures.
3. Invitation to families to enroll.
4. Follow-up orientation in the home.
5. Agreement of family to participant.

6. Intake process:
   a. Identification of head of household.
   b. Social history of family compiled.
   c. Case study of the family written by the home visitors.

7. Assessment team reviews family case study and plans strategies:
   a. Identifies strengths and weaknesses for individuals in family and for family as a unit.
   b. Devices and recommends plan of activities.

8. Implementation of plan through home visitors, contracted services, parent/child centers, and supporting information.
   a. Monitoring of family activities and achievements.
   b. Support of family through specific activities.
   c. Counseling.

9. Reassessment process at six-months intervals.

Once the eligibility is established and orientation is conducted, the families are provided information about the goals, objectives, benefits, and expectations. Following the orientation, they are invited to enroll. The rationale for this process is the desire for families to be willing to commit to the program.
A follow-up orientation is held by a home visitor in the homes of all families that enroll. In this session, program features and services are explained in detail. Some of the expectations are: making appointments; attending parental meetings when possible; becoming involved in educational activities with their children; showing a willingness to participate in the program and activities; and, providing information about the family necessary for operation of the program.

The home visitor compiles a social history of the family. This social data is then compiled into a case history. The case history also includes the family's own goals and expectations from the program; individual strengths and weaknesses; activities which will help the family achieve their goals; and, specific recommendations of activities by the home visitor.

Family Life Enrichment Program

A final parent training method is called the Family Life Enrichment Programs, including Continuous Parent Education Program (CPEP) (National Institute of Mental Health, 1975). These types of parenting programs focus on some aspect of family life enrichment. The CPEP is based on the belief that parenting should be continuous. This method offers a wide variety of child rearing practices and believes that there is no single best way of child rearing for all families (NIMH, 1975). The CPEP assists parents in
planning their own "design for child rearing" and discusses a wide variety of approaches such as Gordon's popular Parent Effective Training approach (1970), Dinkmeyer's (1976) Systematic Training approach as outlined in the STEP program.

A small group of concerned individuals meet in these groups and the group is usually led by a group member. The topics in these meetings are usually from materials and subjects that are of concern to the group members. The group keeps a library of resources that the group can use including magazine articles, books, and films. At the group meetings, the members listen to guest speakers and special films that will be informative to the group members.

Parent Education Program

Another kind of parent training method is The Parent Education Program (Kruger, 1975). It has four main models; only two will be included in this paper - one national program and one local program.

Home Start was one of the first ventures in parent involvement on the national level. The Home Start Demonstration Program was a pioneer effort in the implementation of a child development program utilizing parents as the primary focus in the delivery of services.

The Home Start delivered a comprehensive program of services in the areas of education, nutrition, health, and psycho-social services. Each specific Home Start program
is geared toward an individual family's needs and the
general objectives that are to be accomplished within each
component. The objectives include the following:

1. Education Objective:
   a. To help enhance parents' knowledge and
      understanding of early childhood development, by
      providing them with information and material on
      how to become better educators of their children.
   b. To point out materials in the home that can be
      used as educational toys and games and to develop
      toy-lending libraries.
   c. To help parents reinforce their children's
      positive behavior.
   d. To help parents help their children become
      better prepared for school, by improving their
      language ability and understanding of such basic
      concepts as colors and numbers.

2. Nutrition Component
   a. To assess the nutritional needs of each family
      member and provide direct services and referrals
      where appropriate.
   b. To provide information on such aspects of
      nutrition as the feeding of young children, the
      purchase and preparation of food, and food
      handling and storage.
c. To call attention, where possible, to consumer newsletters and food cooperatives.

3. Health Component
   a. To identify health problems of children and other family members and refer them to appropriate services.
   b. To provide information on family planning and birth control clinics to interested parents.
   c. To help improve home sanitation and safety.
   d. To help provide immunization to children and, where appropriate, other members of their families.

The home visitor was a professional who interacted with the family as a direct supporter and helper. Each home visitor in the initial demonstration project had a caseload of ten families. The home visitor worked with the parent to provide services to the children for the needs and strengths of family members. The home visitor attempted to help parents provide growth experience through conversation, non-verbal interaction, and role modeling.

The home visitor also tried to help parents use resources available at home or in the community to further the child's development. In addition, the home visitor initiated some interaction to help provide services to the child and family. The focus of her task was to provide
services to the parent, while refining the parent's parenting skills. The parents were encouraged to continue the activities initiated, and to explore further when the home visitor was not there. Examples of activities arranged by home visitor included: talking with the mother about each child and the things she is doing to further his/her development; praising her for gains made; and making occasional suggestions. Introducing activities that involve the older children, or that encourages the other children to work with and help with the younger ones.

- Helping the mother with a household chores (such as washing the dishes, making biscuits, or peeling potatoes) and, by involving the child, demonstrating how the activities which normally make up the fabric of each day can be used as constructive learning experiences for children.

- Cooking supper with mother and child, showing the mother (by example) how the child can be involved—noting colors, textures, and shapes of food and kitchen equipment, counting eggs, spoons, etc., and talking.

- Helping parents assess home with regard to safety precautions—exposed poisons, electrical outlets, lead paint, etc.

- Using the local telephone book as a directory of resources, showing mother how resources are listed.
- Using "Parent Effectiveness Training" by Thomas Gordon (1970) to prevent communication problems within families.

- Holding mothers' group meetings to use one another as resources in finding solutions to child-rearing problems.

- Preparing simple guides to accompany children's television programs which are shown locally, to make television watching less passive and more active.

- Suggesting ways to turn everyday events into learning experiences, such as going to the grocery store and playing a "color game" on the way or peeling vegetables and teaching the child size and color concepts at the same time.

Relating Experientially With Parents and Children

The local education program's Relating Experientially with Parents and Children (REWPC) is offered at Prairies View Elementary School in Gainesville, Florida. The program is designed to help parents with children under three years of age to learn and practice parenting skills.

The REWPC program is experimental and multidisciplinary in design. The disciplines represented in the program include early childhood education, child development, counseling psychology, and maternal-infant health. The basic premise behind REWPC is that early childhood education is a very important period in the development of a child's cognitive development. The REWPC tries to help parents
develop their knowledge of and skills with child-rearing principles. The program is supplemented by consultation from the community resource people such as nutritionists, home-economists, and pediatricians. The program is comprehensive and emphasizes information regarding child development.

There are four sequential sessions available during the weekday for non-working parents, and special classes offered on a monthly basis on Saturday for working parents. Examples of topics covered are:

1. Your New Baby and You—for parents, and babies birth to six months old.
2. Your Infant and You—for parents, and babies 12-24 months old.
3. Your Toddler and You—for parents, and babies 24-36 months old.

The materials are presented in a demonstration-practice format where parenting skills and information are presented to the parents. Then the parents try out the skills with their children during class session. After the demonstration, the parents share their concerns regarding their parenting roles. An example of a typical session:

1. Begin with exercises and learning activities with infants and young children in order to:
   a. establish basic communication patterns between parents and infants;
b. facilitate sensory-motor development of infants;
c. encourage the use of natural caretaking situations such as feeding, bathing, diapering, putting to sleep, etc., as opportunities for positive interaction which will enhance the parent/child relationship and the infant's growth and development.

2. Next, post-natal conditioning and relaxation exercises for mothers.

3. Then, conduct a sharing process during the last portion of each class (usually 45 minutes or more), concentrating on discussing:
   a. how the baby has grown and changed during the past week;
   b. how the parents have changed during the week and what they are doing differently as a result of changes in the baby;
   c. what changes or events family members anticipate during the next week. Relatives may be coming or the husband will be away on business, etc.
   d. parents' concerns and interests, such as: baby's feeding; crying; and sleeping; fathers and their involvement with the baby; sibling rivalry; leaving the baby for the first time; feelings
about being a mother or father going back to work; handling negative feelings toward self, child, spouse, and relatives; visits to the doctor; the "super-mother" syndrome; and guilt related to parents and in-laws and a host of others depending on the individual group members.

4. Finally, interdisciplinary consultation from professionals resource people in the community including nurses, nutritionists, pediatricians, home economists, psychologists.

Parents participating in this program are from the entire spectrum of socioeconomic class. The racial population is mixed.
CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION

Nearly all of the programs adhere to the belief that parents, as the core family members, hold responsibility for development of themselves and their children. Interestingly, even though families are seen as basic to the development of children, they are almost never involved in the planning and development of the parenting programs in which they are involved.

The parent educator in almost all of the programs makes assumptions about the needs of the parent except in the Child and Family Resource Program (D.H.E.W., 1975) where the needs are analyzed with the parent before the beginning of the programs.

Both Home Start and Relating Experientially With Parents and Children are interdisciplinary in design and implementation. Most of the programs are comprehensive in trying to involve a wide variety of topics, except for Mother-Child Home Program and Behavior Analysis, which concentrate on one specific area of services which may or may not correspond to the needs of the parents.

Each program tries to develop parenting skills in weak areas and emphasizes the strong areas parents already possess. Each provides for overseeing, supervising, and evaluating the parent activities.
All of the programs focus primarily on early childhood years. None of the programs reviewed focus on parenting skills development during later childhood, adolescence or young adult.

The Home Start program establishes close working relationships with parents. This provides for family-specific suggestions regarding the improvement of the parents' skills.

By assessing parent's strengths and weaknesses and focusing the program's content on those strengths and weaknesses, parents' self-confidence in their abilities can be developed.

Two of the programs are individualized in their training, (MCHP and Home Start), and the other three are group based (CFRP, REWPC, Behavior Analysis).

Most programs were controlled, meaning agendas limit what parents are to do.

By limiting the involvement, the extent and nature of parents influences are controlled.

Summary

Parents should be involved in making contributions to the planning of programs in which they will be involved. A lot of preplanned and prepackaged programs that are brought into the Navajo community impose upon them the attitude that the answers to their educational problems can be solved by methods and techniques innovated from the outside. The
implementation of prepackaged programs are in conflict with the notion that Navajo people should develop their own concept of education and have control of the schools.

The parenting programs almost always assumes the needs of parents. In the education of Navajo children, the government has always assumed the needs of Navajo people, regardless of race or culture, people's needs, desires, and abilities are at different levels. Therefore, Navajos are the ones that should decide what their needs are. Based on that needs assessment, they can plan programs that would meet their individual needs.

Presenting a wide variety of topics may be very confusing to some Navajo parents, and thus a program that is more specific like the MCHP or Behavior Analysis will probably work best as an introduction. In this way, parents involved will be better able to comprehend and understand thoroughly the program. At a later time, additional topics can be added, based on parents' input to make the programs more comprehensive.

All the programs' methods of developing parenting skills are impressive. By building on the strengths of the parents, credit is given for their knowledge of parenting. For those who are not confident in what they are doing, evaluation and supervision are built into the activities. This immediate feedback lets the parent know of how he/she is progressing.
Parenting programs should begin when children are in early childhood. The parent needs to continue to learn because the parenting skills change as the children get older. Programs of the future are addressing life-long learning.

In almost every program there is opportunity for the parent and teacher to develop a close working relationship. There is also a model for parents to observe. This observation encourages the parent to feel comfortable in getting involved. Because Navajos are observers, utilizing them in the classroom when they can model the teacher's behavior and can also be observed by the children, such as is done in the Behavior Analysis Model, is also a good motivating experience for Navajo children. In programs such as the Behavior program, the Navajo parent observes her child; during this period, she is observing how the environment is designed, how the materials and equipment are being used, and how the child interacts with the other children. By designing the environment and by being a role model, the teacher is setting the stage for parents to become involved and to make changes where they think necessary. As an observer, the Navajo parent will become familiar with the use of materials and transfer these activities to home environment.
All the programs that have home visitor involved are ideal for Navajos who live out in the isolated areas and for the families that are out of the bus route areas.

The REWPC has four sequential sessions available during the weekday and special classes for working parents on Saturdays. The Saturday sessions are ideal for parents who work during the weekdays and also good for parents who have family responsibilities during the week. This kind of option is an important one to consider when working with Navajo parents when circumstances make them unavailable on Saturdays.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

There is no convincing evidence that one particular program is significantly more effective than another for increasing the involvement of Navajo parents in the schools. The author cannot conclude from this study that any one program model will work with a Navajo population group better than any other one. Parents have different development stages and different life circumstances. Program planners for Navajo parents need to develop programs that respond to the needs of parents. Information about the different ways in which parents respond to a group needs to be reviewed and can be used to design programs that respond to parents' needs and characteristics. Navajo parents should be involved in planning and developing programs that are relevant to their needs. In this way the program takes into account the parents' strengths and weaknesses. The primary function of a curriculum is to stimulate parents and program staff. The process of and factors involved in implementing a program (such as skills and personality of program staff) may be as important as the curriculum content.

The key to the success of each depends on the degree and extent of the training of the program personnel. This training is necessary because the Navajo people in the program will respond better to people who are competent and
know what they are doing. Navajo people are very sensitive to experts and competence, especially in people who know the culture, as other Navajo. Follow-up is also critical because Navajo people are sensitized to "one-day wonders" who never return to see if the suggestions are effective.

The school district's role must be that of leaders, organizers, and resources to build the role of parents. In so doing they must attempt to make parents aware of resources, information, and materials available to them to help them educate their children. The school or other organizers should not limit itself to a set of programs.

The goal of the school needs to be to increase the level of consciousness in all parents, to make them aware of their importance in their children's education, to help them obtain the information they need, to provide them the help they need to be more effective with their children, and to help them become more aware of mass media and community resources that are available to them in the education of their children.
CHAPTER V
RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to review the literature regarding the effectiveness of various parent participation programs to consider which, if any, might hold promise for use with Navajo parents. The following recommendations are made regarding the implementation of effective parent involvement programs in Navajo schools:

1. The Navajo Division of Education needs to have an organization that deals with parent involvement, a group that does not change with political change.

2. The school needs an organization of administrators, teachers, and parents that will receive and distribute information to school personnel and provide the training necessary to deal effectively with parents and foster parent involvement.

3. Parents need leadership, information, and to be made to feel welcome in the school if they are to help make the school a better place. The parents need to create some kind of organization to develop leadership and learn to set their own agendas and priorities. The school system needs to help with the organization, training, and information-giving. Information to be included would be how education works, how it is financed, how decisions are made that affect the lives of their children.
4. Parents need support from administrators in local school districts, as well as state and local government. A commitment by the staff of a school is the essential component to a successful parent involvement program.

5. There should be continuous activities going on that will attract parents to the school, such as weekly workshops that will help parents work with their children, or involving them in working the classrooms as volunteers.

6. There should be a lot of ways to inform parents of what is happening at school besides just sending notes home with children. Examples of alternative ways could be announcements on local television and radio stations, in local newspapers, a newsletter, and at chapter meetings.

7. There should be some kind of recognition for parents that do participate, such as being invited to go on field trips with students, getting free lunches, bumper stickers, and an annual banquet of involved/volunteer parents.

8. It is further recommended that a study be conducted.

All Navajo parents of children from one kindergarten classroom would be invited to participate in an orientation at which different parenting models would be introduced.

After the introduction to parenting models have been presented, a needs assessment would be completed for each parent interested in participating. A careful analysis of
each family’s needs, strengths, weaknesses, values and goals would be assessed prior to working with the family.

From this a category of who would be in which training sessions would be determined.

Procedure

1. Training in the classroom: Navajo parents that live in a community where they are close to a school would observe or help teachers as classroom assistants.

2. Home visits: Navajo parents who are living in the isolated areas where they are not close to school or bus routes would have the home visitors come to their homes.

3. Weekend training: Those parents who work or have family responsibilities during the week would have a special training session on weekends.

4. Parents who are not busy and are willing to attend a workshop session during the week would have training sessions during the weekday.

Overall, the training sessions would vary for each group. The parents in the classroom could go daily from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 1 to 3 p.m. and be trained within a nine-week grading period.

The training sessions would be a program plan with a great deal of input from the parents explaining their needs. If parents wanted training in child development (for example, developing stages) or in helping their children with homework, then they would have to come to an agreement
on what they want so there would not be two or three topics
going on at the same time.

The home visit parents would be trained individually
based on the same format.

The parent participation would be evaluated by how many
parents come to the training and what percent of the parents
participated from the beginning to the end. The program
would be considered successful if 50% of the parents
completed the entire program.
REFERENCES


