THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDES OF PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

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THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Within the last two decades there has been an increased emphasis on the need for programs designed to serve the special needs of students. Before the advent of these programs, the primary role for parents of special need students in education was that of support (Sayler, 1971). Traditionally, parents were asked to help their schools when there were emergencies or when resources were insufficient. However, a new role for parents emerged in recent years, one in which parents are more active and participate more meaningfully in educational affairs.

Many people are concerned about the impact of parent involvement in education. This includes (a) those who are concerned with finding ways to increase parent involvement and (b) those who fear that parents may be a negative force. It is the belief of this researcher that parent involvement, especially in programs designed to meet special needs of students, can do a great deal to help bring about improvement in the quality of education provided to students and

enhance relationships between the child, the parent, and the school.

Statement of the Problem

Studies of parent attitudes toward educational programming for handicapped children have increased within the last decade, but research regarding the impact of involvement in education upon parent attitudes is limited. Many studies have documented the needs of parents for help in dealing with their handicapped children (Kennel & Klaus, 1971; Mercer, 1974). Studies have yielded evidence that involvement has led to increased understanding of the educational program (Abramson, Willson, Yoshida, & Hagerty, 1983). Significant positive relationships have been found between parent participation and parent satisfaction with educational programming, and also between parent participation and student achievement (Herman & Yeh, 1983). Involvement of parents has increased in recent years, but use of parents in the classroom setting is still limited. Studies of the attitudes of parents who have served as classroom volunteers and how that type of involvement has affected their attitudes is almost nonexistent. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of serving as a classroom volunteer upon the attitudes of parents.

This study of parents with children enrolled in a handicappped preschool program attempted to determine if there was a relationship between involvement in classroom

volunteering and reactions to the program. Parent involvement in volunteering was defined as the number of hours spent in the classroom of one's own child or another classroom while serving as a classroom volunteer. Parent reactions were studied by examining attitudes in four areas. The first area to be studied involved attitudes concerning the effectiveness of the program in helping the parents to understand and accept their child's handicap and equipping them to help their children. The second area of attitudes concerned the extent to which the parents understood the program, and included items regarding understanding of educational procedures, philosophy and goals, educational and legal rights and opportunities, and structure of the program. Attitudes revealing the level of satisfaction with the program were examined next. Items addressing this issue dealt with satisfaction with the program in general, as well as accomplishments of the program and specific aspects involving materials, methods, and staff. The last area of attitudes studied was the child's progress as seen by the parent. Perceived levels of progress in developmental, physical and social skills were examined.

Hypothesis

It was expected that this study would find a significant positive relationship between the amount of time served as a parent volunteer in the classroom and reactions to the program. Four hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis I: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and items that address attitudes concerning the effectiveness of the program.

Hypothesis II: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and items that address the extent to which the parents understood the program.

Hypothesis III: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and items that address the level of satisfaction with the program.

Hypothesis IV: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and items that address the level of progress of the child as perceived by the parent.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parent Involvement in Education

There has been considerable interest among educators and parents concerning parent involvement in education. In a recent poll by the National Education Association (NEA, 1981) it was found that over 90 percent of teachers in all parts of the country and at all grade levels responded that more home-school interaction would be desirable. A Gallup poll of public attitudes toward education reflected a similar interest in closer teacher-parent relationships (Gallup, 1978), and Gallup made the following summary of survey findings over a ten-year period:

> A joint and coordinated effort by parents and teachers is essential to dealing more successfully with problems of discipline, motivation, and the development of good work habits at home and in school . . . For little added expense (which the public is willing to pay) the public schools can, by working with parents, meet educational standards impossible to reach without such cooperation. (p.35)

Several promising approaches to parent involvement have been developed and used for many years in local, university-based, and federal experimental programs such as Parent-Child Centers, Head Start, and Follow Through (Gordon &

Wilkerson, 1966; Gordon, 1970; Maccoby & Zellner, 1970). However, parent participation in classroom volunteering has remained limited (Dolly, Digieso, & Page, 1981). Schools and projects have rarely sponsored such volunteer programs, and parent-initiated efforts have been rarer, according to Covert and Suarez (1981).

Parent participation at the preschool level has traditionally been encouraged, and parent participation at this level has been greater than at the elementary level (Greenwood, Breivogel, & Bessent, 1972; Winton & Turnbull, 1981). Researchers of many such programs (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Moles, 1982) concluded that active family involvement at the preschool level is critical to program success.

A Historical Perspective

The historic beginnings of parents working with teachers can be found in early childhood programs in the United States and England around the turn of the century. According to Bain (1938)

> The nursery school developed the parent education movement, and from the first embraced the purpose of seeking the coordination of the care and education of young children in the nursery school with the procedures of their homes.

The first nursery school in London, begun in 1908, stressed the importance of working with parents as well as children, and teachers visited homes and met with groups of parents to discuss child-rearing techniques. Similarly, kindergartens

organized in the United States before the turn of the century tended to schedule the afternoons for teachers to work with parents and to visit homes. The Denver County public school system initially funded a parent education and preschool program in 1926 that stressed family health education, child-rearing theories, and specific parenting skills (Berger, 1981).

The focus on parental involvement was diminished in the 1950's, however, when parents were generally viewed as unimportant in the teaching process of their children and educators controlled the educational content and delivery of programs. This viewpoint changed during the 1960's when research findings presented overwhelming evidence that early environment has a profound effect on a child's development (Nedler & McAfee, 1979).

Large-scale efforts to involve parents in the educational experiences of their children began with the mandate of parental involvement in the federally funded Head Start program in the 1960's. Today parent involvement activities have expanded to include involving parents in policy-making, allowing parents to provide resources for the school, and helping parents become better informed (Goodson & Hess, 1975).

A Look at Some Current Programs

The Florida Follow Through Program, in operation from 1970 through 1981, is one example of a university-based

program designed to increase parent involvement. Its operation included 10 states and involved over 5000 students and 200 classrooms. Four levels of parent involvement were (a) bystander-observer, (b) teacher of the child, (c) volunteer, (d) trained worker, and (e) participant in decision-making, especially through advisory board membership (Gordon, 1970). Seven percent of parents worked in the classroom as volunteers during the school year studied.

The Home and School Institute has developed "home learning recipes" that build family interaction and academic progress without duplicating school activities. These easy to follow programs aimed at improving basic skills have been adopted by various school systems for use in elementary school projects (Rich, Mattox, & Van Dien, 1979). The Parents Plus program in Chicago has brought poorly educated and low-income parents into the school one day a week to learn how they could help at home with current school work, as well as expand their homemaking and community-related skills. The Houston Failsafe program gave parents computer-generated individualized suggestions for improving their children's performance in deficient areas. Large numbers of parents attended the well publicized conferences with teachers where these suggestions were discussed (Moles, 1982). The Philadelphia School District pioneered the use of telephone hotlines to help students with homework problems and to inform parents of school events and provide

them with educational advice (Collins, Moles, & Cross, 1982).

Collins et al. (1982) identified 28 programs in upper elementary and secondary schools in the 24 largest American cities that involved parents in improving the school performance and social development of their children. Means of involvement included individual conferences, workshops or classes, and home visits or telephone calls to parents. Eighteen of the 28 programs expected parents to tutor their children at home, 21 sought to use parents in broader socializing roles, and 19 helped parents plan their children's home and community educational experiences.

Parent Attitudes Toward Involvement

The conception of the role that parents should play in public education has undergone a dramatic shift in the last two decades. With the advent of legislation mandating public education for all children and educational rights for parents, such as the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, parents have been asked to assume a more direct role in their children's formal education. Federal programs have attempted to involve parents in more active, meaningful ways in the educational affairs of their children, and many states have subsequently developed programs with similar parent involvement components (Sayler, 1971; Berger, 1981). A concept of partnership between school and family has

developed, and attention is often focused on the total family rather than solely on the individual child.

Parent disenchantment with public education has also been a factor in increased participation (Herman & Yeh, 1983). This disenchantment and frustration led to the organization of activist and support groups, such as the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities organized in 1963. Many of these groups addressed the unique needs of persons with specific handicapping conditions. Other established organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children, began to take a more active role in seeking equal rights and opportunities (Brown & Moersch, 1978).

United by a common cause and undergirded with mutual support, parents began to take more initiative in becoming involved in the education of their children. Increased involvement provided the parent with insight to the educational setting and information about the child's schooling. Involvement helped schools defuse parental criticism and mollify public concern (Herman & Yeh, 1983).

To assess the impact of increased interest among parents and educators alike, a survey was conducted by the National Institute of Education (1983) of 82 elementary schools across 16 school districts in Maryland. Of the 1270 parents who responded to a questionnaire on their reactions to and experiences with teacher practices of parent involvement, the following was learned:

> About 30% of the parents had helped a teacher in the classroom or on class trips;
>
> About 12% had assisted in the library, cafeteria, or other school areas;
>
> About 30% had participated in the administration of fund-raising activities for the school. (p.7)

Of the parents who were active, the average times spent at school per year were 4.1 days helping the teacher in class, 3.5 days helping in the school cafeteria, office or library, and 7.0 days helping in fund raising activities. Only about four percent of the respondents were very active, spending more than 25 days per year at the school or on school business.

Grade level appeared to have an impact on parent involvement, with parents of children in lower elementary grades reporting significantly more frequent parent involvement, more frequent communications from the teacher to the family, and more frequent participation by parent volunteers at the school. Parents of older elementary children reported they did not have enough training to help their children in reading and math activities at home, and felt a lack of confidence about helping (NIE, 1983).

Disappointing results were reported in an attempt to increase parental participation and support in a rural southeastern school district (Dolly et al., 1981). Efforts to secure the assistance of parents in volunteering capacities were successful with parents of only 35 out of 338 children, and only 10 continued volunteering after the

parent training program was completed. Interviews with parents indicated almost 70 percent did not participate because they felt their children did not need remediation and would not benefit from their participation. This attitude prevailed even when parents were presented objective data indicating deficiencies in their children's skills. The researchers concluded that the unwillingness of the schools to tell parents the truth about the skills children have or have not learned helped create a climate where parents refused opportunities to help their children.

Professional Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement

Various types of parent involvement were evaluated by elementary teachers in a regional survey of six southwestern states (Williams, 1981). Generally, teachers were not enthusiastic about parent participation in curriculum development, instruction, or school governance. They did support other forms of parent involvement, such as tutoring or assisting with homework, but felt teachers should give parents ideas about how to help.

In a survey of 3700 teachers and their principals (NIE, 1983) teachers agreed that parent involvement could help solve problems, and parent involvement in the classroom could bring increased understanding to parents of how to help their children with activities at home. Teachers believed parent involvement to be a good idea in general,

but many ran into problems when they tried to implement such practices. Teachers' use of parent involvement was influenced by several factors, including the following:

> (1) Grade level taught influenced the kind of activities used, with use of reading activities and informal learning activities decreasing from grades 1 to 5 and contracts and TV-based or other parent-child discussions used equally, although rarely, across all five grade levels.
>
> (2) Teachers who believed they could influence parents to conduct home learning activities used more parent involvement techniques than other teachers, particularly regarding use of informal learning techniques and teaching parents to teach.
>
> (3) Some teachers' home involvement practices were influenced by the education level of the child's parents, believing that only well-educated parents could really help their children at home. Others who were frequent users of parent involvement practices developed systems to involve all parents (NIE, 1983, p. 7).

This study (NIE, 1983) revealed that in the upper elementary grades there was less use by teachers of parent involvement practices and less confidence in parents of their ability to help their children.

Teachers' attitudes toward use of parent involvement techniques were not closely related to their actual use of techniques, although most teachers said they needed and wanted parents' assistance. Support from the principal was unrelated to the practice or opinion of parent involvement, indicating that teachers apparently can develop parent involvement strategies without strong, nearby support, although administrative support has many advantages (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Many conditions may create barriers which limit the extent of home-school cooperation. Among them, from the parents' perspective, are demands of work and family life, cultural background differences of parents and teachers, and feelings of anxiety and/or mistrust in dealing with school staff. Teachers also face competing demands of school and home, may lack training for dealing with parents, and may have difficulty relating to culturally different families (Moles, 1982).

It is the belief of Lightfoot (1978) that home-school relations are inherently in conflict. Different priorities and perceptions of families and schools, such as concern for one's own child versus responsibility for group progress, inevitably create conflict over the means of attaining common goals. Lightfoot sees collaboration largely as a one-way process with schools seldom accommodating in a significant way to family needs.

Tangri and Leitch (1982) identified a number of barriers to home-school collaboration in their studies of two inner-city junior high schools. Teachers reported competing home responsibilities, fears for their own safety at night events, the perception that parents do not transmit educational values, and low expectations regarding parents' follow-up efforts. Parents reported family health problems, work schedules, having small children, fears for their safety, late notice of meetings, and not understanding their

children's homework. Both groups reported that most communication between them was negative, and both reported that the school work was beyond the comprehension of some parents, in spite of their desire to understand and help.

Some problems noted with parent visits in the classrooms of Head Start preschoolers were described by Melcer (1970). It was found that days set aside for parent visits were often trying, as the teacher and her staff were under pressure to do their job well. All children reacted to the day of their own parent's visit with some increase in tension, distractibility, and/or infantile behavior, even when the parent was not actually present in the room. It was the conclusion, however, that the benefits of the bi-weekly visits outweighed the disadvantages.

Benefits of Parent Involvement

One benefit of parent involvement cited by Herman and Yeh (1983) was increased support for the schools. This included more favorable responses to bond issues and additional resources for school operations. Also reported was the formulation of programs more suited to the needs of their children when parents actively participated.

Policies regarding parent involvement often involve choices between emphasis on parent involvement at school or parent involvement at home. The NIE study (1983) found that parents with children in the classrooms of teachers who frequently used home learning activities were more likely

than other parents to report that (a) they received ideas for home involvement, (b) they felt they should help their children at home, (c) they understood more about their children's schooling, and (d) they rated the teacher higher in overall teaching ability. Actual use of parent involvement in practices at home was significant in the four areas mentioned above, and other measures of parent involvement, including parent assistance at school, did not have a significant effect. However, it was learned from teachers that having parents involved at school helps teachers feel more comfortable about asking other parents to help their children with learning activities at home.

A study of parent involvement in school districts receiving federal education funds included a study of parents participating as instructional volunteers in 57 projects across the country sponsored by Titles I and VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This study (Melaragno, 1981) concluded, based on field observations, that the main educational and institutional consequence of this form of participation was that parents became better informed about the project through the information exchange that occurred between parents and teachers, and through the parents' observations of activities in the classroom. This study also found that parents who were active participants, either as volunteers or paid assistants, indicated that they had acquired knowledge and understanding of the project, felt more

comfortable in the educational environment, and had improved in self-confidence. There was a virtual absence of negative outcomes.

Additional research within this same study focused on the outcomes of using parents as paraprofessional aides, and indicated personal outcomes of increased self-confidence and role satisfaction. Other results of the use of parents as aides were reported as follows:

> Several sites reported that students had improved their attitude toward school work, their general conduct, attendance, or their motivation because of the fact that their parent or a neighbor parent was now assisting in the classroom and had occasion to view most of their school work.
>
> Parents of some students began asking questions more freely once parent aides were in the classrooms. These parents felt that the aides spoke their own language and thus were better able to explain the purposes of the program and the progress of their child. (Melaragno, 1981, p. 65)

The Florida Follow Through Program was evaluated by Gordon in 1971 (cited in Greenwood et al., 1972) to assess the impact of the program upon parents and children. Parent changes in self-esteem were measured by Gordon's (1968) How I See Myself Scale and parents' sense of potency was measured by a modification of Rotter's (1966) I-E Scale called the Social Reaction Inventory. Approximately half of the parent educators gained in terms of two aspects of self-esteem--interpersonal adequacy and competence--and 43 percent gained in terms of internal feelings of control over what happens to them.

Gains in the home as a learning environment were also assessed using the Home Environment Review, a structured interview technique developed by Garber & Ware in 1970 (cited in Greenwood, et al., 1972). Data was collected from all parents whose children were involved in the Follow Through program. Gains were noted in many areas, including parents' use of rewards for intellectual attainment, press for language development, and availability and use of language development tools. The largest increase was noted in the provision of learning materials in the home, followed by the amount of reading encouragement in the home and learning opportunities outside the home. Gains in parents' awareness of their child's development and in the parents' trust in the school also occurred in about one-third of the homes.

An experiment in Great Britain tested the hypothesis that the language skills of children ages 7 to 8 could be improved if parents were involved in the program. Three groups of 15 children were exposed to identical, single-term programs and were subsequently tested using the English Picture Vocabulary Test. In two groups parents worked in the classroom, and in the third group they did not. Findings supported the hypothesis, as significantly greater increases in language skills were found among children in the groups in which parents worked (Rathbone & Graham, 1981). Two other programs using parent volunteers in reading--one at the upper elementary level and the other in a secondary school--also reported benefits to students,

including improvement in reading ability (VanCleaf & Martin, 1984; Hooker, 1985).

Parent Involvement in the Education of Handicapped Children

Even greater trends toward parent involvement in the classroom can be seen in the education of handicapped children. Legislation authorizing the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP) network set forth requirements to involve parents in a comprehensive fashion in such programs. Parents may decide to participate for many reasons, some of which are stated in a report by Toole, Boehm, and Eagen (1980) as follows:

> (a) to see how the classroom program is run, (b) to observe how their own child functions in the classroom with adults and other children, (c) to interact with children other than their own, (d) to demonstrate an active interest in fostering their child's development, (e) to teach children and help the teacher, (f) to observe the developmental and learning processes of the children, and (g) to observe the various ways the teacher handles inappropriate behavior of children. (p.3)

Government emphasis on increasing parental involvement in education in general has used the terms "should" and "ought" but stopped short of mandating involvement, while in special education the official pronouncements have considered parents as partners in education,. It is the belief of many educators, however, that the involvement of parents in both assessment processes for special education and the

actual education of their children in special schools and classes is an area in which benevolent rhetoric has superseded reality (Tomlinson, 1982). A study of about 1300 professional members of educational planning teams indicated that parents were viewed primarily as "gatherers and presenters of information" rather than actual contributors to the educational planning for their children (Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, & Maxwell, 1978).

If parents are to function as decision-makers in educational planning, professionals must establish a working relationship with them. Shevin (1983) presents four models of interaction between parents and professionals:

1. Uninformed consent is often the result of assumed consent on the part of the professional, who (a) assumes parental consent because the parent does not ask questions, (b) partially informs the parent by presenting only the most positive possible outcomes, and/or (c) omits informing the parent of alternatives. In this model parents are often hindered from making meaningful contributions to the decision-making process.

2. Uninformed participation gives the parent sole responsibility for goal formulation, with professionals serving primarily as facilitators. Such an approach neglects the fact that parents may lack information and resources needed in making decisions and adaptations necessary to meet their child's particular goals.

3. Informed consent occurs when a parent consents to a program or placement outlined by professionals with a full understanding of the rationale, potential benefits and risks, and available alternatives. However, this approach offers a narrowly limited model for the parent, who has only the choices of consent or refusal to consent.

4. Informed participation exists when the parent is involved in the identification of educational priorities, in the development of strategies for effective goal development, and in the ongoing review and modification of those goals for his or her child. This model represents the greatest amount of ongoing, active commitment on the part of the parent, but a school or agency oriented toward this type of involvement can establish meaningful interactions with all parents, even those with limited resources of time and energy.

The available evidence indicates that many parents feel uninvolved and inadequately consulted in the assessment process. Many also report feeling uninformed, misinformed, or overwhelmed by professional expertise when their children are actually placed in special education (Tomlinson, 1982).

Parent Attitudes Toward Involvement

There has been a great deal of variability in parents' attitudes toward involvement opportunities, both from one parent to another and within the same parent. A study by Winton and Turnbull (1981) revealed individual differences

in responses of 31 mothers of mildly or moderately handicapped preschoolers in 15 preschools in North Carolina. In this survey concerning eight categories of involvement, the activity selected as most preferred was informal contact with the child's teachers. Two major characteristics were mentioned by parents in describing these contacts: (a) that they be frequent (drop-off and pick-up times were thought to be excellent times to engage in such contacts) and (b) that information be shared between parents in a give and take fashion. Parent training opportunities ranked second in preference, followed by activities designed to help others understand their child, parent counseling, volunteering outside and inside of class, and serving on the policy board.

Winton and Turnbull (1981) also reported anecdotal evidence which suggested that parents have an evolving set of needs, which in turn is reflected in different attitudes toward parent activities at different points in time. One mother is quoted as follows:

> When he was first born we really got involved, and it was tremendously beneficial. But now I just want to draw back and make sure that this little guy gets it at home. When you're putting in so much time that your family is no longer benefiting from it, then it's time to quit and let somebody else do it . . . that's where we got. (p.17)

Open-ended interviews conducted during this study revealed that 65 percent of the mothers interviewed felt they needed a break from involvement with their handicapped child, and

were relieved to have competent professionals take responsibilities for child care during school hours. However, 61 percent mentioned the value of having a satisfying parent-professional relationship, and most parents wanted to be involved in some way. The presence of involvement activities (i.e., parent groups, parent training opportunities, or parent counseling) was a factor in the selection and evaluation of preschools by 52 percent of the parents interviewed.

A common child characteristic that has been associated with noninvolvement of the parents is the severity of the disability with its associated compounding problems. The more severely handicapped the child is, the greater the daily demands on the parent. To quote the mother of a profoundly retarded daughter:

> Disabled children use up enormous amounts of their parents' physical and psychic energy. Our children require more of everything, and those who take parenting seriously give it to them. Yet all the rest of life goes on and also demands its due from us, and the collective demands must be accomplished within the same twenty-four hour day allotted to everyone. . .

In such cases, the time the child spends in school may be the only respite available in a 24-hour period when the parents can attend exclusively to their own needs or those of other family members.

Research by Karnes and Teska (1980) indicated that parents were often uncomfortable with professionals and were not convinced that professionals were sincere when they

suggested parent involvement. Parents were often uncertain what was meant by "involvement". Past experience with professionals in their own schooling had often been negative, and that attitude may have inhibited the development of positive relationships in the present.

Since many parents have not been trained to be advocates for their handicapped children, they often have not expected involvement, and have been even less apt to insist upon or demand it. There have been indications of increased awareness by parents, however, and the formation of pressure groups to press for resources for their handicapped children has resulted in more frequent initiation of involvement by parents. The advice of one articulate parent of a severely handicapped three-year-old is an example: "Challenge the system, challenge the lack of resources, question professionalism, and set your sights on the provision you want." (Parents Voice, 1978). Parents who are less informed and articulate have sometimes demonstrated challenge by adopting strategies of refusal and non-compliance which eventually "defeat" the professionals (Sewell, 1981).

A questionnaire designed to determine how parents view their role with school personnel, their child's academic and social progress, and integrated programs involving handicapped and non-handicapped children was completed by 43 parents of learning disabled children in two suburban school districts. The responses revealed that an unexpectedly

large percentage of respondents felt that they had little to contribute about their child and did not see themselves in a partnership role with the schools (Abramson et al., 1983). A significant correlation was found between level of parent participation and parents' view as to whether or not they had a partnership with the school. Parents who participated tended to view their relationship with the schools as a partnership, and parents who considered their school relationship a partnership expressed greater confidence that teachers were improving their child's academic and social abilities.

Professional Attitudes Toward Involvement

Parents who act as advocates for their children run the risk of being labeled a nuisance by school personnel (Lowry, 1983). Parents have been viewed as troublemakers by many professional educators, and interest shown by the parent in educational programming has often been viewed negatively. Morton and Hull (1976) observed that school personnel have often adopted the attitude that parents are not educators; consequently, they are not in a position to make decisions regarding the child's education. Parents have sometimes been accused of interfering with the program and of being motivated by the desire to find fault or blame the school for the child's problems.

Professionals have generally not been trained to work with parents (Karnes & Teska, 1980; Seligman, 1979), and

therefore often have felt incompetent and uncomfortable in doing so. Thus, to guard against failure, some professionals have protested that parents are not interested or that parents are eager to turn their responsibilities for the handicappped child over to the school. The reactions of professionals have often suggested that parents are threatening to them and that professionals want to keep the parent at a distance in order to avoid criticism (Karnes & Teska, 1980).

Evans (1975) stated that one reason why professionals have not wanted parents to be involved was that they were in "outright competition" with parents. Research has confirmed that many professionals have assumed the role of parent surrogate and that they have resented interference from the natural parents (Clements & Alexander, 1975; Kelly, 1973; Yoshida et al., 1978).

Some professionals have contended that parents need counseling before they can be involved in the educational program of their child, and according to Kessler (1966) some have felt that involvement should be limited to counseling that is centered on the parents' emotional problems in accepting the child's handicap. Kessler also stated that other professionals have argued that since many of the handicapped child's problems can be attributed to poor child-rearing practices and rejection on the part of the parents, it is a waste of time to try to change the behavior

of parents and the teacher should spend the time working with the young child.

Professionals who do advocate parent involvement have often failed to make the distinction between parental involvement with the child and parental involvement with the program. Too often they have assumed that good parents will become involved with whatever parent activities are offered, regardless of the parents' needs or desires. In encouraging parents to be actively involved in the child's program they may overlook the very legitimate need that some parents have to not be formally involved at times (Winton & Turnbull, 1981).

Lack of actual parent involvement prior to the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 was indicated in a study by Kirp, Buss, and Kuriloff (1974), who found that, in the majority of school districts investigated, the formal educational planning meeting where parents were involved served only to provide endorsement of previously made decisions. They stated that it may well be that school personnel have encouraged participation only at an informal or non-meaningful level. The model parent has been described as one "who neither resists nor discusses", but complies with the professionals' decisions.

Since the passage of Public Law 94-142, parent participation in children's educational programming has increased, but the degree of parental contribution to decisions reached at individualized education program meetings appears to be

questionable (Duncan, 1983). Gilliam (1979) conducted a study to determine the perceived rank order of personnel involved in educational planning meetings and the actual contribution of personnel. Data indicated that parents were rated high in perceived importance prior to the meetings but lower in relation to actual contributions. Gilliam suggested that while parents are viewed as important because of their close contact with the child, their actual contributions may be limited because of feelings of intimidation and lack of familiarity with terminology used to report information about test scores, cumulative records, and diagnostic reports.

In the past professionals have traditionally focused most of their attention on the handicapped child. However, there has been a growing sensitivity among professionals to the impact of the child's special needs on the family unit, and as a result the parent-professional relationship has been examined more closely (Lowry, 1983). According to Seligman and Seligman (1980), the professionals, with their training and commitment, have to assume the major responsibility for improving or building a positive relationship between the two parties.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Administrators have often resisted any marked degree of parent participation for fear that it would have a negative effect upon the school (Karnes & Teska, 1980). Administra-

tive lack of support has been reflected in small or non-existent budgetary provisions for the parent component of a program and failure to designate a staff professional to coordinate family involvement of handicapped children.

The whole ideology of professional expertise has denied that parents are competent to make educational decisions about their children, and the attitudes of professionals towards parents of handicapped children have undoubtedly been shaped by the social class position of the clientele with which they deal (Tomlinson, 1982). In the education literature the influence of the "good home" on educational success has been extensively documented and the concept of "defect" has historically been linked with a variety of social ills. According to Tomlinson, it is therefore not surprising that many professionals have viewed parents as probably ignorant and incompetent and in need of help and advice. This attitude has contributed to the difficulties of establishing satisfying parent-professional relationships in which parents feel valued and respected, and which foster meaningful parent participation.

A study by Hocutt (1980) indicated that individual parent programs were not a top priority for experts in the field of education. In this study a panel of 20 nationally known experts in education policy and early childhood were asked to clarify the policy of parent involvement for the HCEEP by generating parent activities for a prototype project. The activities considered most important by the

experts were passive activities, and the primary emphasis placed on parents was that of learner.

Some educators have hesitated to involve parents in helping their children with academic difficulties because of their belief that it often results in harm to the child, the parents, and their relationships (Lerner, 1981). Children being taught academic skills, when learning is the area of most difficulty, may fail consistently in front of the most meaningful adults in their lives. Lerner also cited that parents have often found that helping children in academic areas can be formidable and frustrating, and the pressures and demands of the learning situation interfered with the role of the parents in developing a good self-image within their children.

The involvement of parents in the education of their handicapped children has had either beneficial or detrimental effects, depending upon the individual situation (MacMillan & Turnbull, 1983). Some of the potentially detrimental effects reported by parents in this study were frustration, absenteeism from work, time away from other children, decreased leisure time, physical exhaustion, the feeling that one is doing things one should not have to do, and emotional dependence on the program staff. Detrimental effects on the child have included a worsening of relationship with the parent (due possibly to the parent's increasing resentment of time and effort expended), increased dependence on the parent, increased pressure to achieve, and

a decrement in the instructional and social climate due to interference by the parent or overprotectiveness.

Benefits of Parent Involvement

The involvement of parents in the home and school learning environments of their handicapped children is sound educational planning according to Schopler (cited in Schultz, 1982). Parent involvement can do a great deal to help bring about improvement in the quality of education provided to students and also bring about many benefits for the parents (MacMillan & Turnbull, 1983). An extensive body of literature, based primarily on studies of early intervention with disadvantaged children and special education preschool programs, supports the beneficial effects of parent involvement for the child, the parent, and the program (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Karnes & Teska, 1975; Wiegerink, Hocutt, Posante-Loro, & Bristol, 1980). Research has also shown that parents are interested in the growth of their handicapped children and can acquire new knowledge and skills to act as change agents (Berkowitz & Grozinno, 1972; Duncan, 1983; Fredericks, Baldwin, & Grove, 1976; Karnes, Zehrbach, & Teska, 1972; Moles, 1982).

Bronfenbrenner (1975) concluded his reassessment of the research on parent involvement: "The evidence indicates that the family is the most effective and economic system for fostering and sustaining the development of the child." Calvert (1971) found three major reasons for training family

members: (a) to enable them to help their handicapped child, (b) to enable them to help themselves, and (c) to further the program as advocates.

Benefits for Children

Beneficial effects for children have included more rapid developmental gains, better relationships with parents, pride in having parents involved in schooling, and improvement in the instructional or social climate as a result of the parent's participation (MacMillan & Turnbull, 1983). There can be no doubt that parent involvement helps children to sustain gains made at school and that children accomplish more when home and school work together (Karnes & Teska, 1980).

Developmentally handicapped children have not easily generalized newly acquired skills beyond the immediate context in which the skills were learned (Lovaas, Koegel, Simmons, & Long, 1973). The most effective way of facilitating the carryover of new skills has been to integrate teaching efforts between school and home through involvement of parents (Schultz, 1982). Parents have been effectively trained to reinforce and generalize learning at home (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968; Berger, 1981; Williams, 1981).

The consideration of parents' priorities in dealing with home environment and daily living has been shown to be a factor in successfully meeting the goals of home programs, as parents have been much more likely to initiate and follow

through on programs that have reflected their priorities rather than those established for them by a professional (Schopler, Reichler, & Lansing, 1980).

Benefits for Parents

Parents who have been involved in their handicapped children's education have reported enjoyment of the experience, increased understanding of the educational program, and the opportunity to learn things that enable them to work more effectively with their children. They have also reported enhanced self-esteem because of the meaningful contributions, and a feeling of "belonging" that is satisfying to the parent (MacMillan & Turnbull, 1983).

Research by a regional demonstration program in Yorktown Heights, New York (Toole et al., 1980) determined several benefits to parents serving as classroom volunteers in programs for handicapped preschoolers. Advantages cited were opportunities to teach specific skills, learning to work with children in groups and individually, and the opportunity to see and learn about their own child in a surrounding other than home. Lillie (1975) also cited advantages to parents who served as assistants to teachers and other staff. Such involvement facilitated parents' understanding of their handicapped children and put parents of handicapped children into contact with one another. This contact often led to supportive and mutually beneficial relationships.

One important ancillary home benefit from parent involvement has been the positive effect on other family members (Gray & Klaus, 1970). When parents have learned improved ways of working with one child, the benefits of the newly learned skills have often generalized to other youngsters in the family.

Benefits for the Program

Schools have profited from parental involvement, as most schools have limited budgets and parents can provide needed assistance at little cost to the institution (Clements & Alexander, 1975). That parents can assume direct teaching responsibilities in the classroom without jeopardizing the learning of the own child or other children has been documented (Karnes et al., 1970). There is evidence that parents can also acquire the skills to become advocates for programs that meet the special needs of their handicapped children (Edgerton, 1967; Floor, Rosen, Baxter, Horowitz, & Weber, 1971).

Involvement has allowed parents to share information with professionals which has helped the latter to program more adequately for handicapped children. Parents' knowledge of their own child has been helpful to the teacher in determining a number of routine things about the child, and when parents have participated in educational assessment and experienced good communication with the classroom teacher,

school teaching priorities have often been more readily achieved (Schultz, 1982).

An additional benefit of using parents as volunteers has been the elimination of some of the problems encountered with community volunteers. As parent motivation is usually high because their own children, as well as others, benefit from their participation and regular attendance, they have often proved to be a dependable source of help (Toole et al., 1980).

Parent Attitudes Toward Educational Programming for Handicapped Children

Research in the area of parent perspectives and attitudes regarding the involvement of parents in the education of their handicapped children has been limited (Abramson et al., 1983; McKinney & Hocutt, 1982; Winton & Turnbull, 1981). In general, parents have indicated that they wish to help facilitate their child's educational growth, although the nature of this participation has varied. Although also limited, studies of parent attitudes toward educational programming in special education have increased within the last decade.

Awareness of the Needs of their Handicapped Children

Few parents have entered parenthood with the necessary skills for promoting their children's growth and for devel-

oping good interaction patterns with their children. Parents of handicapped children have needed additional parenting skills for maximizing their child's development, while still maintaining a normal family life (Brown & Meorsch, 1978). Parental stress reactions to the birth of a handicapped child have been well documented (Emde & Brown, 1976; Kennell & Klaus, 1971; Mercer, 1974). Research by Drotar, Baskiewicz, Irvin, Kennell, & Klaus (1975) using a structured interview technique to study reactions of twenty parents to the birth of a handicapped child found a consistency of parents' reports of passing through similar stages of shock, denial, sadness, anger, and adaptation before finally reaching the stage of acceptance.

The reactions of mothers to first information concerning their child's condition have appeared to be closely related to the perceived interest and concern of the professionals who contact the mother (Roskies, 1972). Parents' initial perceptions of their children have also been influenced by their perceptions of the professional as sympathetic and understanding or abrupt and cold. Emde and Brown (1976) found that an empathetic response on the part of professionals lessened the parents' grief and facilitated their adaptation to the reality of the condition.

The pattern of general lack of information about available services seems to have prevailed among parents of children with a variety of handicapping conditions (Young, 1980). Justice, O'Connor, and Warren (1971) reported five

problem areas identified by 171 parents of retarded children: learning, health, behavior, supervision and care, and physical disabilities. Although most parents reported that the resources or services which they contacted were indeed helpful, they did not generalize the use of services in one problem area to services in other areas. A large proportion of parents reported that they did not know of any additional service that might help them, or they reported that no other services were needed. Other parents have reported that they have found themselves in conflict with medical, educational, or other support services that offer discrepant advice or contradictory opinions (Ariel, 1975; Roskies, 1972), but seldom have felt competent to question professional judgment (Booth, 1978).

In a study designed to assess how parents of learning disabled children have viewed their relationship with school personnel, a large percentage of parents indicated awareness of information about their children which could help or contribute to their education. Of the parents responding to a Parental Questionnaire Regarding Educational Practices for Learning Disabled Children (Abramson et al., 1983), 30 percent indicated they had information to offer, 42 percent stated they sometimes had information, 10 percent felt they had no information, and 2 percent were uncertain.

Understanding of Educational Programming

Forty-three parents responded on the Parent Questionnaire administered by Abramson et al., (1983) to the question, "How much understanding do you have about your child's educational goals?" Forty percent of parents replied that they had a great deal of understanding, 40 percent replied that they had some understanding, 18 percent replied that they had very little understanding, and 2 percent replied that they had no understanding.

A study of parents' feelings about school services was done by Lowry (1983) using questionnaires and interviews of 65 parents of minority handicapped children in two urban areas. The results indicated that although a majority of parents indicated that they had received information regarding the legal rights of handicapped children and were familiar with Public Law 94-142, 39 percent had not received such information. Moreover, the study revealed that 21 percent of parents were unaware of other individual parents or parent groups of handicapped children, and only 34 percent believed there were organizations in their communities which were doing a good job in assisting Black parents of handicapped children.

There is evidence that involvement of parents in the education of their children has often led to increased understanding of the educational program. The study by Abramson et al. (1983) determined a significant positive relationship between participation by parents of learning

disabled children and understanding of their educational goals. Melaragno (1981) reported that parents who were active participants in the education of their children indicated that they had acquired increased understanding of the project.

Herman and Yeh (1983) reported that socioeconomic status has had an effect on parent awareness of school operations. Their findings that parents of higher socio-economic status indicated more awareness of school operations were based on the responses of second and third grade parents from 256 schools participating in California's Early Childhood Evaluation Program. This effect was evident at both classroom and school levels.

Satisfaction with Educational Programming

Herman and Yeh's (1983) study also addressed the question of parent satisfaction, and found significant positive relationships between parents' perceptions of their influence in decision-making and the perceived quality of parent-teacher relationships. Sixty-one percent of parents interviewed by Winton and Turnbull (1981) expressed a desire for a satisfying parent-professional relationship. Opportunities to have input into what was planned for their child as well as information about their child's progress seemed to be the chief components that contributed to parent satisfaction.

A previously cited study conducted by the NIE, (1983) revealed that parents' attitudes toward their children's schools and teachers were remarkably positive. Over 90 percent felt their school was well run and that the homework assigned was appropriate and useful, and 85 percent said that they and the teachers had the same goals for the child. Interactions with teachers were characterized as cooperative by 77 percent of parents responding, but over 40 percent did not feel respect or warmth in their relationships with teachers. Despite their generally positive attitudes, parents reported that teachers could do more to involve them in learning activities at home.

Lowry (1983) studied parents' feelings about school services and found that 79 percent of respondents indicated satisfaction with the school programs of their children. Thirty-three percent had no problems with school services, 48 percent were mostly satisfied, but also mentioned shortcomings and deficits in their children's placements, and 31 percent indicated they had had problems with school services and felt their child needed additional services. This study also suggested that parents who made their presence known in the school setting tended to have a view that school services were adequate.

To investigate parent involvement in selected metropolitan Atlanta school districts, parents of special education students were asked by researchers from Georgia State University-College of Education to complete a ques-

tionnaire. Parents responding to questions regarding their child's IEP's were more positive in their responses when their children were young and relatively new to special education, when the children had not been classified behaviorally disordered or educably mentally retarded, when the parents visited the school regularly and maintained a close contact through PTA meetings, and when parents perceived the school personnel as genuinely interested in their child (Re, 1980).

Parents of children enrolled in special education programs have experienced greater dissonance from school officials than parents of children in regular programs (Marion, 1981). The available evidence indicated that many parents of handicapped children were dissatisfied with the insensitive way in which their child's disability had been revealed to them (Warnock Report, 1978). Chazan and Lang found that many believed they had been given inadequate and confusing information about the nature of their child's disability and insufficient guidance on how to cope with the child at home (cited in Marion, 1981). A study by Hunt (1973) of 94 parents of handicapped children recorded that over half of the parents were dissatisfied with the way in which the professionals had treated them. More research in the area is needed, but based on available information there are clear indications that many parents have found the parent-professional relationship to be less than satisfactory (Lowry, 1983).

According to Tomlinson (1982), parents have often felt uninvolved and inadequately consulted in the assessment processes and uninformed, misinformed or overwhelmed by professional expertise when their children are actually placed in special education. Booth (1978), in a study of the social process by which a young baby became classified as a handicapped child, noted parental suspicion at what they regarded as "professional prevarication". According to Booth, such "prevarication", which might well be a result of clinical uncertainty, has laid a basis for mistrust and a feeling that "they don't tell us anything".

Perception of their Child's
Educational Progress

Many parents are uncertain about how their child is functioning in an educational setting. In a poll by Abramson et al. (1983) of 43 parents of learning disabled children, results indicated that 44 percent were very confident that their child's teachers were improving their child's academic performance. Thirty-two percent were moderately confident, 12 percent were less than confident, 7 percent were not at all confident, and 5 percent were uncertain. Other responses to the same questionnaire indicated that 37 percent of parents believed their child was doing the best work that could be expected, 30 percent believed their child could perform better, and 33 percent were uncertain.

Richards and McIntosh (1973) noted that some parents attributed their child's delayed progress to lack of available services. One typical comment: "If she had received physiotherapy, she might have been walking by now".

A study of parents involved in school-sponsored home tutoring programs through Florida Follow Through projects (Melaragno, 1981) reported that student classroom performance improved when parents took an active role in tutoring them in curricular subjects. This exercise seemed to impart a sense of importance and caring on the part of the parent, which resulted in a positive attitudinal change on the part of the student toward school work.

Herman and Yeh (1983) found a significant negative relationship between school-home communication and student achievement. This finding was contrary to their expectations, and was attributed to the practice of calling parents in for conferences and providing them with written reports when their children perform poorly. However, they did find significant positive relationships between parent participation and student achievement.

A search of the literature regarding parent involvement revealed few studies of parent attitudes in relationship to volunteering in the schools, and very few studies of attitudes of parents who had served as classroom volunteers. No studies were found which compared the attitudes of parents in relationship to the amount of time parents had spent as a classroom volunteer. The purpose of this study was to

determine whether or not such a relationship exists and, if so, the nature of that relationship.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Subjects

This study was conducted with parents of children enrolled in a private, non-profit developmental center for handicapped children. A parent questionnaire was administered in May, 1985, to parents of 38 children enrolled in the regular school program of the center. At least one parent of each of 31 children returned the questionnaire, including 15 who had volunteered in the classroom for five or more hours during the previous year and 16 who had not served as classroom volunteers. The questionnaire was administered anonymously to maintain confidentiality and encourage honest responses. Therefore, no data regarding the sex and ages of parents responding is available. Each volunteer estimated the number of hours served in the classroom during the previous year. The number of hours volunteered ranged from 5 to 500, with a median of 20 hours.

The Little Light House, where this study was conducted, is located in a southwest United States city of approximately 300,000 population. The center provides educational programming for children with mental or physical handicaps, including visual and hearing impairments, learning disabil-

ities, and multiple handicapping conditions. Its home and regular school programs serve children from birth to chronological age 10 or mental age six, and its mainstreaming assistance program serves children in grades 6 through 12. The Little Light House, founded in 1972, has made extensive use of community and parent volunteers since its beginning, in addition to certified teaching personnel.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study was adapted by this researcher from a questionnaire developed by Musumeci and Koen (1980) for use in assessing the effectiveness of programs involved in the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP). The Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix C) was adapted to accommodate differences in the structure of the Little Light House program, and included three sections.

Section I determined degree of parent involvement. Section II contained items designed to elicit parent reactions to the program, and was divided into five subsections addressing ease of adaptation, effectiveness in helping parents, satisfaction with the program, understanding of the program, and perceived level of progress made by the child. Each subscale contained items to be answered on a Likert-like scale of 5 to 1, with 5 indicating the highest rating. Section III consisted of open-ended questions addressing major strengths and weaknesses and

recommended changes in the program. Portions of the questionnaire, including parts of Section I, Section II-A , Section II-B (items 7-9), Section II-D (items 14-16), and Section III (Open-Ended Questions), were designed solely to provide information for the directors of The Little Light House, and were therefore not analyzed as part of this study.

The four subscales developed for this study in Section II were adapted from the HCEEP subscales, which were assumed to have been intuitively derived, as no evidence was given to indicate factor analytic derivation. Each was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency reliability. Items which did not contribute, arbitrarily determined by $r<.35$, were discarded (see Table I). The subscales will hereafter be referred to as Effectiveness (Section II-B, dealing with effectiveness in helping parents), Understanding (Section II-C, indicating understanding of the educational program), Satisfaction (Section II-D, reflecting parents' level of satisfaction with the program), and Progess (Section II-E, indicating level of the child's progress as perceived by the parent). Item-total correlations are presented in Table I and means and standard deviations of the final subscales are presented in Table II.

TABLE I

CORRELATIONS OF ITEMS TO TOTAL SCORE BY SUBSCALE FOR PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Item	r	p
Effectiveness		
1. In helping you understand your child's handicap	.666	.000
2. In improving your attitudes about your child's handicap	.750	.000
3. In increasing your skills in working with your child	.427	.009
4. In helping you develop more positive feelings toward your child	.637	.000
5. In giving you support as a parent	.552	.001
6. In increasing your sense of self-esteem as a parent of a handicapped child	.544	.001
Understanding		
* 1. Philosophy of The Little Light House	.128	.247
* 2. Goals of your child's program	.154	.204
3. Screening/placement procedures	.854	.000
4. Contacts with various professionals	.710	.000
5. Teaching methods of your child's program	.664	.000
6. Methods for teaching your child at home	.380	.018
7. Methods for managing behavior	.690	.000
8. Legal rights as parents	.807	.000
9. Educational rights of your child	.680	.000
10. Handicapping condition of your child	.625	.000
11. Services available in the community	.705	.000
12. Role of classroom volunteers	.502	.002
13. Parent support group	.606	.000
Satisfaction		
**1. Little Light House program in general	--	--
2. Instructional methods used	.472	.004
3. Materials used	.709	.000
**4. Effectiveness of staff	--	--
* 5. Teachers' and aides' support of parents	-.003	.493
* 6. Teachers' understanding of your child's needs and abilities	.009	.482
* 7. Frequency of contact with teachers	.184	.167
8. Frequency of contact with other parents	.631	.000
9. Your involvement with the program	.539	.001
*10. Answers to your questions	.136	.233

II (Continued)

11. Screening/placement procedures	.364	.022
12. Methods of monitoring progress	.707	.000
13. Accomplishments of the program	.654	.000
Progress of the Child		
1. Speech and language skills	.720	.000
2. Physical and motor skills	.717	.000
3 Social skills	.847	.000
4. Interaction with and acceptance by other children	.710	.000
5. Self-help skills	.800	.000
6. Interaction with family members	.598	.000

* Items deleted, p<.35
** Items deleted, no variance

Reliability studies of the Effectiveness scale yielded a Cronbach's (cited in Sowell & Casey, 1982) alpha coefficient of .89 for items 1-6, with all six items obtaining Pearson's r correlations >.35 (see Table II). On the Understanding scale, 2 of the 13 items obtained item-total correlations of <.35. After deleting these two items, numbers 1 and 2, the alpha coefficient for this subscale was .88.

Analysis of the Satisfaction scale yielded two items which had no variance. Items number 1 and 4 were answered with a score of five by all 31 subjects, and were therefore not included in calculating Cronbach's alpha. Four items with weak item-total correlation were discarded, numbers 5, 6, 7, and 10. After removing these items the alpha obtained was .75. On the Progress scale all six items obtained the desired item-correlation, and the alpha coefficient was .83.

TABLE II

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF FINAL SUBSCALES OF PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE *

Subscale	All Subjects[a]		Classroom Volunteers[b]		Non-Classroom Volunteers[c]	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Effectiveness	24.807	7.494	23.400	9.905	26.125	4.113
Understanding	43.194	8.879	44.533	6.999	41.938	10.415
Satisfaction	41.032	3.894	41.733	3.283	40.500	4.351
Progress	24.258	4.803	23.600	5.221	24.875	4.455

[a] $N = 31$; [b] $n = 15$; [c] $n = 16$

*with starred items from Table I deleted

For each of the four hypotheses (see page 4) a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated. The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether or not a relatioship existed between the hypothesis and the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer. Validity of the instrument was based upon the validity of the original questionnaire from which it was adapted, as changes were mini-mal. Face validity of the original instrument is demonstrated by its wide use in evaluation of programs within the Handicapped Children's Early Education Project (Musumeci & Koen, 1982) and its selection as an example in an educational publication by Covert & Suarez (1980) designed to teach principles of questionnaire construction.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its sample -- a small, intact group which lacked random assignment. The questionnaire format did not include information regarding variables which might influence the ability to volunteer, such as sex, age, work status, and socioeconomic status of the individual completing the questionnaire. There may also be a limitation based on the deletion of subscale components on the Satisfaction subscale, such that the subscale title as originally derived may no longer adequately describe the scale. This study is a correlational study. Therefore, causal relationships cannot be inferred from results.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The presentation and analysis of data for this study will be reported as they relate to each of the hypotheses. The format for this chapter will be that of stating each hypothesis and presenting an analysis of the related data. Following is a discussion of the rationale for performing analysis of variance and t-tests and the results of those tests. Tables III through VI present related statistical information.

Hypothesis I

Hypothesis I: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and attitudes concerning the effectiveness of the program.

The Pearson product-moment correlation between hours and effectiveness was found to be .140, and was not statistically significant (see Table III). It cannot, therefore, be stated that parents who volunteer in the classroom for five or more hours per year will have more positive attitudes concerning the effectiveness of the program in

helping them as parents of handicapped children than parents who have not been classroom volunteers.

TABLE III

PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS WITH CORRELATIONS AMONG FINAL SUBSCALES OF PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hours	--	.140	.508	.315	-.081
2. Effectiveness		--	-.191	-.424	.160
3. Understanding			--	.603*	-.236
4. Satisfaction				--	-.330
5. Progress					--

df=11, n=13
*=significant at <.05

Hypothesis II

Hypothesis II: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and the extent to which the parents understood the program.

The Pearson product-moment correlation for the two above variables was found to be .508 (see Table III). This was not statistically significant, and therefore did not indicate a positive relationship between the time spent

volunteering in the classroom and understanding of the program.

Hypothesis III

Hypothesis III: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and the level of satisfaction with the program.

A nonsignificant positive Pearson product-moment correlation of .315 was found between the two variables (see Table III). Thus, no prediction can be made regarding the relationship between classroom volunteering and satisfaction with the program.

Hypothesis IV

Hypothesis IV: There was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and the level of progress of the child as perceived by the parent.

There was found a Pearson product-moment correlation of -.081 between the two above variables. This weak negative correlation was not statistically significant (see Table III), and therefore no relationship was observed between hours spent as a classroom volunteer and perceived progress of one's child.

TABLE IV

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR NON-VOLUNTEERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS ON FINAL SUBSCALES OF PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Subscale	Non-Volunteers X	Non-Volunteers SD	Other Volunteers X	Other Volunteers SD	Classroom Volunteers X	Classroom Volunteers SD	Total X	Total SD
Effectiveness	24.56	4.50	27.83	2.71	23.40	9.91	25.63	6.01
Understanding	41.17	11.41	41.17	9.28	44.53	7.00	43.19	8.88
Satisfaction	41.22	1.38	40.80	1.11	41.73	3.28	41.52	.63
Progress	22.89	4.48	27.33	3.33	23.60	5.22	24.26	4.80

TABLE V

SUMMARY TABLE FOR ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BETWEEN NON-VOLUNTEERS, OTHER VOLUNTEERS, AND CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS ON FINAL SUBSCALES OF PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p*
Effectiveness					
Between Groups	2	40.31	20.16	.54	NS
Within Groups	27	1008.66	37.36		
Total	29	1048.96			
Understanding					
Between Groups	2	123.37	61.68	.77	NS
Within Groups	28	2241.47	80.05		
Total	30	2364.84			
Satisfaction					
Between Groups	2	5.95	2.98	.25	NS
Within Groups	26	311.29	11.97		
Total	28	317.24			
Progress					
Between Groups	2	75.96	37.98	1.73	NS
Within Groups	28	615.97	21.99		
Total	30	691.94			

*p<.05

Additional Findings

To investigate a concern regarding different kinds of involvement in volunteering, an analysis of variance was performed on each of the four subscales to determine differences between the following groups: (a) parents who had not volunteered in any capacity during the previous year; (b) parents who had volunteered in other capacities, such as office helpers, fund raisers, and maintenance helpers; and (c) parents who served five or more hours during the previous year as classroom volunteers. No significant differences were found between the means of these three groups, as reported in Table IV and Table V.

TABLE VI

RESULTS OF t-TESTS COMPARING VOLUNTEERS AND NON-VOLUNTEERS ON FINAL SUBSCALES OF PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Subscale	t	df	p
Effectiveness	.99	18.44	.336
Understanding	-.82	26.37	.420
Satisfaction	-.89	27.78	.379
Progress	.73	27.62	.472

A t-test analysis was done as a subsidiary study to compare the mean scores on each subscale for parents who had served as classroom volunteers and parents who had not. For this comparison, mean scores of parents who had volunteered in capacities other than classroom volunteering were combined with the scores of parents who had not volunteered in any capacity to form a group of non-classroom volunteers. As referenced in Table VI, the analysis revealed no significant differences between the two groups.

Another finding was a relationship between the subscales of Understanding and Satisfaction. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of .603 (see Table III) indicated a significant positive relationship between these two variables.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions of the Study

There were four hypotheses formulated in this investigation. Statistical analysis yielded the following results, and served as a basis for these conclusions.

The results obtained from the test of the first hypothesis revealed no significant relationship between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and attitudes of parents concerning the effectiveness of the program in helping parents to understand and accept their child's handicap and in equipping them to help their children. A search of literature yielded no studies in this particular area, but did indicate that many parents feel a need for help in understanding, accepting, and dealing with the special needs of their handicapped children (Justice et al., 1971; Young, 1980).

The lack of variability in responses within this subscale is characteristic of all subscales of attitudes studied. Mean scores on the six items which comprised this scale ranged from 4.42 to 4.79 on a Likert-like scale from 5 to 1, with 5 representing a very high level of effectiveness. This restricted range of group variability could be a

factor accounting for the lack of significant results. Another factor making it difficult to achieve significance in statistical analyses is the small number of subjects sampled.

Analysis of results of the second hypothesis yielded a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of .508 with a probability confidence level of .076. Although this relationship did not obtain statistical significance, it approached the coefficient of .553 needed to establish significance ($p<.05$). This researcher believes that a larger sample size might have indicated a statistical difference of significant value.

This finding could be interpreted as partially agreeing with the research of Abramson et al. (1983) of 43 parents of learning disabled children which found that parents actively participating in their learning disabled child's educational program indicated greater understanding of their child's educational goals than non-participants ($F = 6.35$, $p<.01$, $df = 3,38$). It also partially supports the findings of Melaragno (1981) that parents who were active participants in the education of their children indicated that they had acquired increased understanding of the project.

The third hypothesis, which stated that a positive relationship was expected between the number of hours spent as a classroom volunteer and satisfaction with the program, was not supported by statistical analysis. Re (1980), studying

a related aspect of involvement, found that responses of parents of special education students were more positive when the parents visited the school regularly and maintained close contact with the school. Studies by NIE (1983) and by Lowry (1983) indicated that the majority of parents surveyed expressed satisfaction with their child's educational program. However, studies of parents who felt their children needed special services revealed lower levels of satisfaction than that of parents of children in regular programs (Marion, 1981).

A low level of satisfaction did not appear to be a factor in the lack of establishing a positive relationship in the present study. One finding of the present study was the expressed level of high satisfaction -- a rating of 5 on a Likert-like scale of 5 - 1 -- by all of the 31 subjects responding to the questionnaire on two of the items: (a) satisfaction with the program in general and (b) effectiveness of the staff. As was found in examining the Effectiveness subscale, the mean scores of all subjects on the total Satisfaction scale were high. With the exception of Item 9, the means for all items ranged from 4.00 to 5.00, leaving little range for significant differences (see page 63). This finding could be interpreted as indicative of the success of The Little Light House program in meeting the needs of the families involved. Item 9 referred to satisfaction with frequency of contact with other parents, an item on which lower ratings may have reflected dissatis-

faction because of time constraints rather than shortcomings of the program.

The final hypothesis, that there would be a positive relationship between the number of hours served as a classroom volunteer and the level of the child's progress as perceived by the parent, was not supported as no positive significant relationship was found. Instead, a weak negative relationship was indicated. This finding did not support the findings of Herman and Yeh (1983) who found a positive significant relationship between parent participation and student achievement. This may be partly attributed to the fact that the Herman and Yeh study included regular as well as handicapped students.

An additional finding of this study was a positive relationship between the subscales of Understanding and Satisfaction. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of .603 was significant. This finding could suggest that parents who have a high degree of understanding of the program are likely to also be highly satisfied with the program. However, scrutiny of the final Satisfaction subscale reveals that affective items relating to people were removed to achieve reliability of the scale, leaving only items of a cognitive nature which resemble items on the Understanding subscale. That the final Satisfaction subscale measures much the same construct as the Understanding subscale is a more plausible explanation for the correlation between the subscales, and suggests that the final Satisfac-

tion subscale may be measuring one variable and the items discarded from the original subscale measuring a different variable.

Recommendations for Further Research

The review of literature included in this study suggests that parent volunteering in the classroom, especially with handicapped preschool children, may have some important benefits for parents and schools, as well as the children involved. It is, therefore, recommended that further research be conducted. Optimally, this research would include more subjects, and would also extend to parents of students in regular settings at all educational levels and with varying degrees and types of participation. Other variables to examine might include differences between attitudes of parents of children with differing types and severity of handicaps, as well as a study of the effects of socioeconomic and educational level on the attitudes of parents.

Factor analysis of the Satisfaction subscale to determine whether it is measuring one variable or two distinct variables is recommended. The lack of variability of responses in all subscales of the Parent Questionnaire suggests modification of the relative scaling used. The ceiling effect evident in this study would suggest the inclusion of a wider range of positive responses with a more positive response category at the center of the rating

scale, especially on the Effectiveness and Satisfaction subscales. This would increase the likelihood of variability of responses, which would allow differences to be found if in fact differences exist.

Concluding Statement

Although this study did not support the hypotheses, the results revealed very positive overall attitudes by almost all parents of children enrolled at The Little Light House. The findings were excellent for this school! However, if one is to find differences in reactions there must be variability among the subjects sampled, and available evidence indicates it would be unrealistic to assume that such uniform satisfaction exists in most educational settings. Since much of the literature supports the hypothesis that there is a significant positive relationship between parent involvement and attitudes and there is growing interest in parent involvement at the classroom level, this researcher believes that further research in this area is worthwhile.

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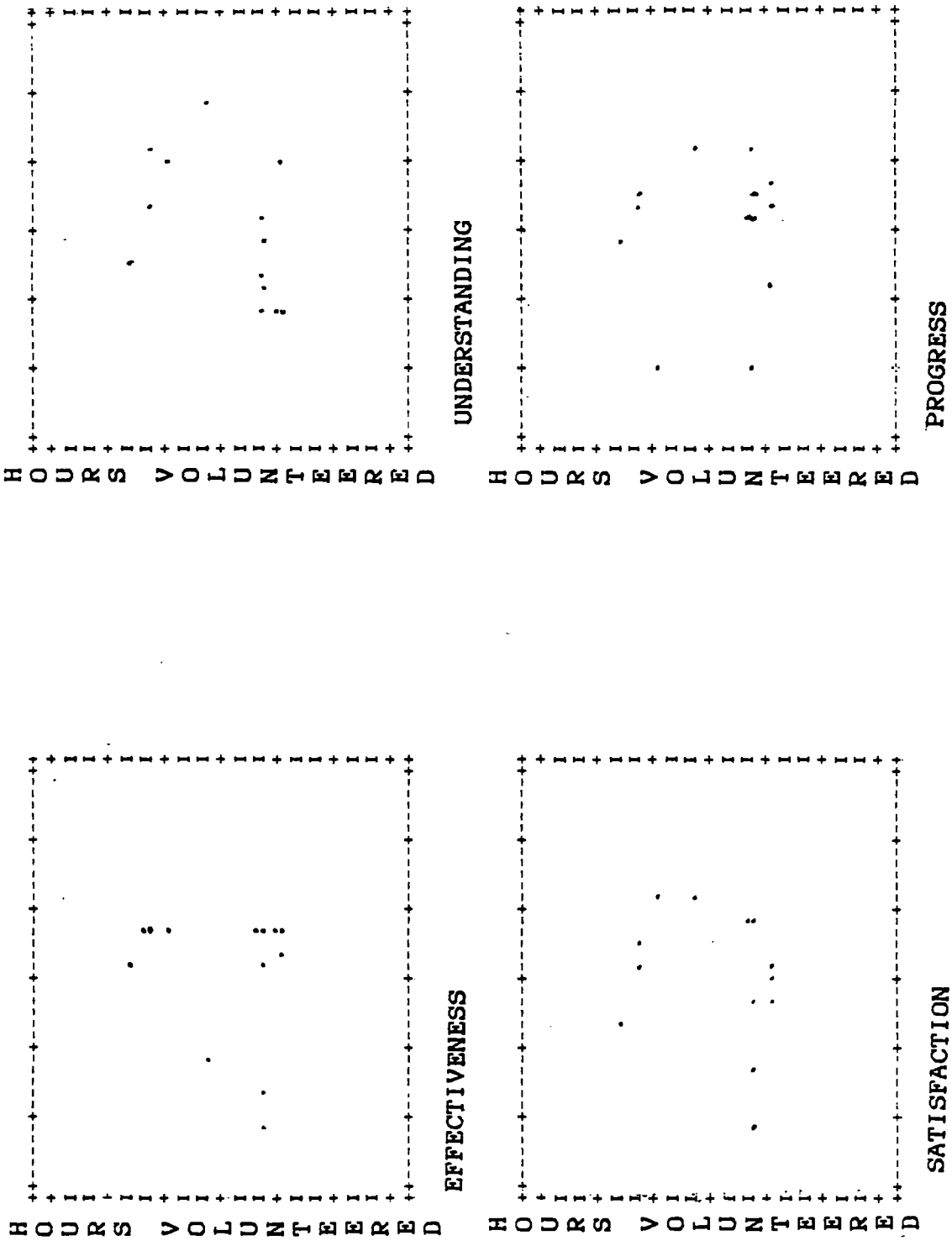
APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SCATTERGRAM OF RESPONSES OF CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS ON FOUR SUBSCALES

SCATTERGRAM OF RESPONSES OF CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS ON FOUR SUBSCALES



APPENDIX B

ADAPTED PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE LITTLE LIGHT HOUSE

THE LITTLE LIGHT HOUSE
A Christian Developmental Center for Handicapped Children
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The Little Light House is conducting an evaluation of its program. The basic purpose of this evaluation is to provide a description of how the program is functioning - its accomplishments, constraints, and concerns. Your cooperation and participation with this evaluation effort will give us the opportunity to obtain valuable information from parents involved with program services.

The attached instrument was designed to document your reactions to and perceptions of the Little Light House program. All responses will be held in strict confidence, and only summarized data will be presented in subsequent reports and research. Your signature is optional, but please complete the following information as soon as possible, and return it to the Little Light House no later than May 22.

1. When was your child first enrolled in the Little Light House? (month, year)

2. Was your child enrolled in a Little Light House home program prior to classroom enrollment?____ If yes, for what length of time?

3. In which program/s is your child presently enrolled?

__Multiple Handicapped I	__Home Program Only
__Multiple Handicapped II	__Home Program and Classroom
__Toddler	__Extended Day
__Preschool	__Speech Therapy
__Early Learning Preschool	for children of volunteers

4. How many days per week does your child attend?___

5. Is your child currently enrolled in any other programs and/or services besides the Little Light House?____ If yes, what type of program (i.e., physical therapy, daycare, other educational program)_____
Level of difficulty obtaining that program: Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Hard
Level of satisfaction with that program: Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

6. Was your child previously enrolled in any other programs and/or services besides the Little Light House?____ If yes, what type of program (i.e., physical therapy, day care, total educational program)_____
Level of difficulty obtaining that program: Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Hard
Level of satisfaction with that program: Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Section I: Involvement in the Program

From what source did you first learn about the Little Light House program? (check one) __Friend or other Little Light House parent __Church __Newspaper/Radio __Social Service agency __Physician __Other (Specify)

Within the past year, did you participate in any of the following parent meetings or activities?
__Child Assessment Conferences __IEP Conferences
__Classroom Visits/Observations __Parent Group Meetings (number attended____)

Within the past year, how frequently did you participate in any of the following volunteer opportunities? 1-once a week, 2-twice or more a week, 3-several times this year, 4-one time opportunity (circle appropriate number)
Classroom Volunteer 1 2 3 4 Office Volunteer 1 2 3 4
Fund Raising 1 2 3 4 Facility Maintenance 1 2 3 4
Other 1 2 3 4

Section II: Reaction to Program

A. How would you rate your child's adjustment to the Little Light House classroom program? Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Difficult

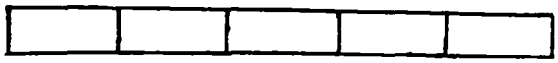
B. How effective was the Little Light House:

	LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS				
	Very	Fairly	Somewhat	Hardly	Not at All
1. In helping you understand your child's handicap					
2. In improving your attitudes about your child's handicap					
3. In increasing your skills in working with your child					
4. In helping you develop more positive feelings toward your child					
5. In giving you support as a parent					
6. In increasing your sense of self-esteem as a parent of a handicapped child					
7-9 - for parents of non-handicapped preschoolers enrolled in the Early Learning Program					
7. In improving relationships between children when at home					
8. In improving the quality of time spent at home					
9. In benefitting your non-handicapped child					

LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS

Very Fairly Somewhat Hardly Not at All

10. (for parents of handicapped children mainstreamed into Early Learning Program) How effective is the mainstreaming program in improving your child's education



11. (for parents of children enrolled in the Home Program now or in the past) How effective are Little Light House contacts in giving adequate information and guidelines

LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

High Low

C. Indicate your level of understanding regarding:

	5	4	3	2	1
1. Philosophy of the Little Light House					
2. Goals of your child's program					
3. Screening/placement procedures					
4. Contacts with various professionals					
5. Teaching methods of your child's program					
6. Methods for teaching your child at home					
7. Methods for managing your child's behavior					
8. Legal rights as parents					
9. Educational rights of your child					
10. Handicapping condition of your child					
11. Services available in the community					
12. Role of classroom volunteers					
13. Parent support group					

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

High Low

D. Indicate your level of satisfaction with:

	5	4	3	2	1
1. Little Light House program in general					
2. Instructional methods used					
3. Materials used					
4. Effectiveness of staff					
5. Teachers' and aides' support of parents					
6. Teachers' understanding of your child's needs and abilities					
7. Frequency of contact wit					
8. Frequency of contact wit					
9. Your involvement with th					
10. Answers to your question					
11. Screening/placement proc					
12. Methods of monitoring yo					
13. Accomplishments of progr					
14. Extended Day Program (if					
15. Use of physical therapy					
16. Use and frequency of spe					

E. The Little Light House program is designed to develop your child's skills in the areas listed below. For each area, indicate the level of progress your child has made:

	LEVEL OF PROGRESS				
	High				Low
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Speech and language skills					
2. Physical and motor skills					
3. Social skills					
4. Interaction with and acceptance by other children					
5. Self help skills					
6. Interaction with family members					

Section III: Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you see as the major strengths of the Little Light House Program?

2. What do you see as the major weaknesses of the Little Light House program?

3. Would you recommend any changes in the program (overall, classroom, Extended Day, therapy, or other programs)? If so, what changes and why?

4. In what ways, if any, have the volunteers at the Little Light House had an impact on your life?

5. Would you recommend this program to another parent of a preschool handicpped child?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Signature (optional): _____

APPENDIX C

PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED PROGRAM
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED PROGRAM
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Center For Resource Management, Inc. is conducting an evaluation of the BOCES Preschool Handicapped Program. The basic purpose of the evaluation is to provide a description of how the program is functioning--its accomplishments, constraints and concerns.

Your cooperation and participation with this evaluation effort will give us the opportunity to obtain valuable information from persons involved with program services.

The attached instrument was designed to document your reactions to and perceptions of the Preschool Program. All responses will be held in strict confidence, and only summarized data will be presented in subsequent reports. Your signature is optional, but please supply the following information which will be used for comparison purposes.

1. When was your child <u>first</u> enrolled in the Preschool Program? _____ (Month) _____ (Year)

2. In which program was your child <u>first</u> enrolled? (Check One)
   _____ Classroom Program
   _____ Home Program

3. In which program is your child presently enrolled? (Check One)
   _____ Classroom Program
   _____ Home Program

4. If your child is in the <u>classroom program</u>, please supply the following information:
   a) Name of teacher: _____
   b) Session child attends: _____ (Morning) _____ (Afternoon)

5. Were you ever a parent volunteer in the classroom program? (Check One) _____ Yes _____ No

SECTION I: Involvement in the Program

The Preschool Handicapped Program (PSHP) has provided various means for parents to become aware of and involved in the program over the past year. This section of the questionnaire addresses itself to the parent involvement activities of the PSHP.

1. From what source did you first learn about the Preschool Handicapped Program? (Check One)

Friend/Other PSHP Parent _____
Nursery School _____
Newspaper/Radio _____
Social Service Agency _____
Physician _____
Posters/Flyers _____
Other _____ (specify)

2. In the past year, did you participate in any of the following parent meetings/activities? (Check all that apply)

Child Assessment Conferences _____
Classroom Visits/Observations _____
Screenings _____
Parent Group Meetings (Number attended: _____) _____
IEP Conferences _____
Other Conferences _____
Classroom Volunteering _____
Volunteer Training Program _____
Other _____ (specify)

3. How effective were these parent meetings/activities in:

(*Place a check mark in the appropriate box for each item listed below*)	LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS				
	Very	Fairly	Somewhat	Hardly	Not At All
a. helping you understand the Preschool Handicapped Program					
b. helping you understand your child's handicap					
c. improving your attitudes about your child's handicap					
d. increasing your skills in working with your child					
e. giving you moral support as a parent					

SECTION II: Reactions to Program

A. Knowledge

Directions: *Please indicate your level of understanding about specific aspects of the Preschool Handicapped Program by circling one number from 1 (low) to 5 (high) for each of the following items.*

	LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING				
	Low				High
1. Philosophy of the program	1	2	3	4	5
2. Goals/purposes of the program	1	2	3	4	5
3. Screening/placement procedures	1	2	3	4	5
4. Transdisciplinary team assessment	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teaching methods of program	1	2	3	4	5
6. Methods for teaching child at home	1	2	3	4	5
7. Methods for managing child's behavior	1	2	3	4	5
8. Legal rights as parents	1	2	3	4	5
9. Educational rights of child	1	2	3	4	5
10. Handicapping condition of child	1	2	3	4	5
11. Services available in community	1	2	3	4	5

B. Attitudes

Directions: *Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the Preschool Handicapped Program by circling one number from 1 (low) to 5 (high) for each of the following items.*

		LEVEL OF SATISFACTION				
		Low				High
1.	Preschool Handicapped Program in general	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Instructional methods used	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Effectiveness of staff	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Frequency of contact with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Materials used	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Your involvement with the program	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Opportunities for your suggestions	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Screening/placement procedures	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Methods of monitoring child's progress	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Accomplishments of program	1	2	3	4	5

C. Perceived Change in Child

Directions: *The Preschool Program is designed to develop your child's skills in the areas listed below. For each area, please check the level of progress your child has made by circling one number from 1 (low) to 5 (high).*

		LEVEL OF PROGRESS				
		Low				High
1.	Speech and language skills	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Physical and motor skills	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Social skills	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Self-help skills	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION III: Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you see as the major strengths of the Preschool Handicapped Program?

2. What do you see as the major weaknesses of the Preschool Handicapped Program?

3. Would you recommend any changes in the Program? If so, what changes and why?

4. Would you recommend this program to another parent of a preschool handicapped child? _____ Yes _____ No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

_____
Parent Signature

VITA

Barbara Joan Ladd Rogers

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDES OF PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 18, 1947. Married to Reid Patrick Rogers on April 28, 1979. Mother of David Baker Rogers and Mark Ladd Baker Rogers.

Education: Graduated from Central High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1965; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Education from Bethany Nazarene College, 1969; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1986.

Professional Experience: Elementary Teacher, Lowry City Elementary School, Lowry City, Missouri, 1970-1972; Family Services Social Worker, Jackson County Welfare, Kansas City, Missouri, 1969-1970; Teaching Assistant, The Little Light House, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1981-1982; Social Studies Teacher, Jenks Public Schools, 1985-1986.