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FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Parent Involvement in the Process of Special Education: Establishing the New Partnership

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Parent involvement in education — and specifically the education of exceptional children — is one of a small set of topics that seem to monopolize professional education literature. Few other subjects have been as extensively and disjointedly probed, prodded, and preached. A manual search of general and special education literature written during the period 1970-1978 uncovered nearly 800 sources in the area of parent-school relationships. Two bibliographies published by the Council for Exceptional Children on parental role in the education of exceptional children list 100 and 112 entries respectively (CEC, 1977a and b). Certainly, there is no dearth of information.

The parents of American school children have always maintained a role in the public education system. The nature and depth of that role have assumed a variety of guises. The parent-school relationship, until post World War II years, was often personal and based upon a number of socioethnic factors. These factors included the following:

1. Most communities were relatively stable, and parents passed their relationships with schools down to their children.
2. Teachers and administrators were an integral part of the community, and many of them returned to teach in the schools that had provided their own educations.
3. Schools were an integral part of the neighborhood; they often functioned as the recreational and social center of the community.
4. The community had relatively homogenous values, and teachers' values were reflected in the values of the community as a whole.
5. Parents and schools had an understanding or "implied contract." Parents viewed education as the means by which the lives of their children would be improved. Thus, they sent their children to school inculcated with respect for and awe of education.
6. The management structure reflected the desires of the community.

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The advent of increased mobility fractured the stability and utility of these relationships and axioms. Schools came to be more frequently administered by professional educators who were not identified with the community. Teachers in inner city schools often commuted from the surrounding suburbs. Now, the educational values of the school may not reflect those of the students, their parents, or the community. Children who are bused from various locales meet the same clash of values. The difference in values may be real or perceived, but its effect is supported by differences in attire, appearance, recreation habits, and other variables. Communities have been changing rapidly in socioethnic composition — and values and expectations reflect the egress and influx of socioethnic groups. Educators have discovered that the manner in which they teach is no longer effective. The implied contract is no longer viewed similarly by parent and teacher.

The impact of large numbers of previously segregated exceptional children entering public schools has created similar problems. Educators can no longer sell the majority view to parents and children whose needs, goals, and desires are different. The onus, then, is on educators to develop a new relationship — one suited to the present situation.

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Educators and parents have not failed to recognize these new sources of conflict. What educators have done, however, is to attempt to convince parents that the values and expertise of the educational system is more desirable and more effective than anything the parents have to offer. Thus, the majority of parent involvement programs have taken the form of training parents to deal with the special needs of their children.

Luterman (1971), Wilkie (1973), Nardine (1974), McConnell (1974), Sykes (1974), Schopler and Reichler (1971), Kifer (1974) and many others reported significant success in training parents to use special educational and therapeutic techniques with their children. Innovation and creativity mark many of these programs. Nardine (1974) used video tapes to provide parents with direct feedback. McConnell (1974) sent professionals from the Bill Wilkerson Hearing and Speech Center into the homes of preschool communicatively handicapped children; these children evidenced significant academic superiority in their later school years. In another undertaking, parents and their visually impaired children attended a six-day camp together, where both groups were engaged in learning experiences (Sykes 1974). Schopler and Reichler (1971) trained parents in therapeutic techniques for use with their psychotic children; this application resulted in improvement in the children's behavior and in family functioning. Predelinquent children and their parents were trained together to develop negotiation responses, in a program reported by Kifer (1974). Research consistently has supported the advisability of parental involvement in the education of exceptional children (Clements & Alexander, 1975). But this involvement must change to reflect changes in law, culture, technology and knowledge of human behavior.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC LAW 94-142

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was signed into law on November 29, 1975, but the final Regulations for that Act were not published until August 23, 1977 (Federal Register, 1977). Thus, two years elapsed before educators began to have the opportunity to investigate the full meaning of the legislation. That impact still has not been realized fully in the area of parent-school relationships. This inertia is similar to that experienced after the portentous *Brown* v. *Board*

of Education decision (Abeson & Bolick, 1974). In spite of the enormous publicity and the extensive media coverage of subsequent events, many black parents did not understand — nor were they able to take advantage of — their newly found power.

A similar response to the parental rights provisions of PL 94-142 should be expected. A vanguard of parents (who are at least partly responsible for the law in the first place) will test their strength. Many others will be unsure of their new role. Educators will feel threatened by this new relationship much as many were by the *Brown* decision. There is, however, a significant difference. The *Brown* decision required schools only to fulfill their obligations as an educational system, whereas the regulations of PL 94-142 are much more extensive. These regulations not only tell educators that equal educational opportunity must be provided, but also how it must be provided, what the specific responsibilities of the school are, how parents are to be involved, what the extent of the educational program must be, and in general expand the school's role as a social agency.

The impact of this law probably will not be contained only in the area of special education. Parents of nonhandicapped children will not long tolerate the unequal conditions created by implementation of the regulations. Probably, there soon will be demands for IEPs for all children, increased parental authority, and perhaps some anger over differential costs. Parents of nonexceptional children can be expected to explore similar rights and privileges for their children. First, however, the current inertia must be overcome.

A recent study by Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell (1978) highlighted the current attitudes of special educators concerning parent involvement and, in fact, demonstrated a firm resistance to meaningful parental impact on educational planning. The investigators questioned more than 1,500 planning team members in Connecticut — a state which has expanded the role of parents to include participation at planning team meetings. (The planning teams determine eligibility and programming for special education candidates.) The team members were asked to indicate which parental roles on a planning team they would support. Of 24 possible roles, only 2 received majority support, and both of those were passive (presenting and gathering basic information). The respondents expressed a strong dislike for parental involvement in evaluation, monitoring, or management of school programs. Thus, the study seems to indicate that educators' attitudes do not correspond with the legal doctrines of parent involvement, nor do they demonstrate an adequate understanding of the forces present in the educational lives of children. Some, if not the majority of educational personnel, appear to cling to a belief that parents may be cajoled into accepting and acquiescing to professional expertise. Parents, then, are essentially viewed as partially incompetent junior partners who are to be convinced of the righteousness of education.

The *real* parent-school relationship is not dictated by law. Law may provide an impulse that initiates a change in momentum, but real and meaningful parent involvement grows out of community values, power balances, parent and teacher expectations, economics, and the general social climate existing within the school, the district, the state, and the nation. In spite of an increased legally defined relationship, the chasm continues to widen — a chasm into which the children of America are poured and are expected to survive.

DEFICIENCIES AND PROBLEMS OF CURRENT PRACTICE

Parent involvement programs generally have neglected to account for the following:

1. Parents are the single most important influence on the development of children.

2. People (parents) who are disenfranchised will not actively seek to support the organization (educational system); in fact, they generally will work against it in some way.

3. When the goals and values of two groups are incongruent, an active process must work between them to ensure that both groups will influence a final agreement if those groups have any desire to produce a joint product (in this case, parents and educators producing educated children).

4. Mutual agreements must have some means of enforcement.

5. Merely teaching parents about education does not ensure their support.

6. Neither parents nor educators can be held solely *responsible* for the educational achievement of children.
7. Parent *responsibility* cannot be dictated, but it must be developed if American education is to be improved.

Few programs openly attempt to develop parental *responsibility* for the educational success of their children. Parental responsibility may have developed incidentally in some programs, but this is rarely a specific objective. Merely training parents is insufficient as a means of eliciting responsibility. Northcott (1973) reported the use of a systems approach to parent participation, in which parents and teachers were exposed to various situations wherein trust and interdependence were built. Another program stressing parent involvement and responsibility led to improved achievement of 70 Title I preschool children (Marcovich, 1975).

Such studies, while informative, still do not address the real issues of parent involvement; they merely expose the superficial aspects of parent training and the utilization of parents as "foot soldiers." There have been few bold attempts to place parents in the role of managers. In fact, Kelly (1974) reported that many educators advise that parent-teacher contacts be limited to conferences, and even warn against parent involvement in the child's academic program. Clements and Alexander (1975) stated that although official attitudes toward parent involvement are voiced as affirmative, they actually range from disassociation to pressure on parents to "pay the price" for keeping their children in special programs. (The previously mentioned investigation by Yoshida et al. (1978) certainly provides objective support for that contention.) Even though Clements and Alexander recognized these serious deficits, ironically, the model they offered provides little more than informational and emotional support to parents; it does not afford parents an active and strong role in the educational management of their children.

The issue is not whether parents should be involved, nor the extent of involvement but, rather, how the situation can be structured to best utilize parents in efforts to maximize the educational achievement of children; that is:

1. How can educators structure the contract (whether written or unwritten) between parents and schools so that both sides must pull their weight toward the same goals?
2. How can parents assume their responsibility in educational success of their children?
3. How can education regain the support of the community?

The first task is to analyze the current situation. It is insufficient and dangerous to accept the current dichotomy that educators are responsible for education in school and parents outside of school, and that neither has a right to invade the sanctity of the other's "territory." Not only is it right that territorial boundaries be permeable — it is mandatory.

The Tenth Annual Gallup Poll on Education (Gallup, 1978) revealed a number of interesting and contradictory trends in public attitudes toward education. The respondents (again) listed discipline as the biggest problem facing the schools. But the public failed to see the connection between parent involvement and discipline, since only 1% listed the former as a critical problem and only 4% viewed lack of interest on the part of parents as a significant deficiency. The schizophrenic response pattern was continued when the public was asked, "What should the schools be doing that they are not?" The fourth-ranked response was a need for more parent involvement. The second-ranked response was a need for better teachers — not meaning better trained teachers, but teachers more able to inspire students to set high goals. One has difficulty understanding how parent involvement could rank so high among priorities, with the simultaneous belief that we should look to teachers rather than parents as a source of inspiration for children.

Have parents abandoned their responsibility willingly or have educators convinced them that parents are not needed? The articles by Kelly (1974), Clements and Alexander (1975) and Yoshida et al. (1978) would seem to indicate the latter. Educators may have succeeded in convincing parents that the task of education is best left to educators. Surprisingly, the issue investigated by Gallup that drew the most definitive response tendency was that parents should be held financially responsible for children's vandalism and school attendance. Thus, fortunately, the public has not totally accepted the schism between school and family.

The Gallup Poll just barely scratches the surface of the problems affecting the parent-school relationship. The social and psychological conditions contributing to this situation are complex and highly emotional. Public respect for education has diminished considerably since George Gallup conducted his first survey in 1969. Educators and the public must realize, however, that it was not teachers who demanded that graduation standards be abandoned or that public schools conduct special programs to hold dropouts in school. The public (parent groups in the forefront) has demanded changes to reflect the changing values of the nation. Education has been reactive. Woodring (1978) discussed this phenomenon with eloquence: Public schools are highly visible and, hence, open to constant criticism. If children continue to misbehave in school, educators are blamed for being lax; if children are punished, parents become angry. Educational philosophy has vacillated because parents are confused about what they want and educators have become overly concerned with maintaining a smooth organization rather than educational quality. The purpose of education has been bastardized, expanded, and diluted.

David McClelland (1977), in a report on power, delivered a unique insight that may be applied to the failures of schools to please parents and to live up to the expectations developed for them. He contends that our social programs (public schools included) have been managed by people who were motivated by "N power" a need to have impact. These people were not satisfied with improvement or achievement; they sought a total, unattainable upheaval whereby all problems would be eliminated in a single swift stroke. Thus, schools were faced with the impossible goals of integrating a society that had been segregated for hundreds of years, of curing poverty, of providing therapy for maladjusted adolescents, and of substituting for parents who were increasingly caught in a whirlwind of change and activity. Such motivation is doomed to failure because impossible goals have been established. The schools have become a supermarket for social services. The role of public education has been an ever widening spiral. Unfortunately, the resources — economic, legitimate, and technological — are not available in sufficient quantities to fulfill all of these new roles. The result is a feeling of frustration and antagonism on the part of both consumers (parents) and providers (educators).

Woodring (1978) suggested that schools go back to doing what they do best and leave other responsibilities to parents and other social agencies. That suggestion, however, does not and will not improve the day-to-day parent-school relationship since neither parents nor schools can turn back the clock to a different time. What is needed is a new model based upon current and forecast conditions.

The impact of Public Law 94-142, discussed earlier, has one other facet that must be considered: PL 94-142 provides a contract that is binding on only one party — the school. Parents have no written, designated, enforceable role. This omission has forced educators to develop IEPs essentially without regard for the most critical factor — parent support. In this case at least, parent support has a far different meaning than parent consent or involvement. Children spend 80% of their time outside of school, but educators are conceptually saddled with the responsibility for the child's total adjustment when, in reality, parents must be held partially accountable. Moral standards and educational attitudes of children cannot be taught in a classroom. Children whose schools are located in communities in mayhem will not improve, in spite of all educational effort, unless their communities and parental responsibility improve (Woodring, 1978). Schools run a distant second to parents in influence on young children and an even more distant third to peers and parents during adolescence (Mussen, Conger, & Kagan, 1969). Yet, we continue to castigate schools disproportionately for the failures of children. Neill (1978) reported a study conducted by the Rand Corporation that concluded:

> Short of drastic changes in the U.S. education system, there appears to be limits on how much public schooling can change students either absolutely or relative to other social influences (family, peers, or the economic system). Federal policy should lower its sights (p. 157).

Another alternative would be to apportion responsibility for educational success (however defined) among those groups who can be held at least partially accountable (parents and educators in the elementary schools, with a possible expansion to students in the secondary schools). Clements and Alexander (1975) rightfully pointed out that the responsibility for education and socialization is a shared one. Our schools often have operated as a secret society. Parents were included only to the extent of getting them to go along with whatever was offered. Educators felt that they could impact on

children only if they neutralized parent impact by keeping them ignorant. What resulted was a situation in which parents (especially parents of exceptional children) believed that the schools could take care of everything by themselves. The end product was an estrangement from the system of the people who can have the greatest impact — parents.

In this regard, education may gain a principle from medicine. Physicians may not attempt to cure a person who will not agree to the prescribed treatment. If a patient fails to accept the prescription or diagnostic tests, a doctor may send a registered letter to that patient announcing that he is releasing himself from responsibility. What educators have done is to project an ability to cure the man in spite of himself. In fact, if the studies by Yoshida et al. (1978) and Kelly (1974) are at all indicative of the current attitudes, educators have not only accepted but have sought the messianic task of educating the nation's youth in spite of themselves or their parents. For this, education will continue to pay the price. It may be easier just to accept the harsh public criticism than to undergo the tense and demanding rituals and adjustments of sharing responsibility.

The attitude discussed in the preceding paragraph has a secondary effect. It creates a power struggle between parents and schools. Educators have relied upon expert power as a manipulative device. Parents have been forced into a position of perceived powerlessness. May (1972) terms the power possessed by education and other social organizations "nutrient power": the ability of an individual or a group to provide for the welfare of another individual or group. The resultant powerlessness of the recipient leads to an adversarial position wherein the recipient resents the control exercised by the "benevolent" provider. The provider then becomes a foe simply because of the power differential.

Power, in the American culture, is perceived as innately negative. It is perceived as alien to democratic ideals (McClelland, 1975). The teacher/parent or educator/community relationship, however, is based upon power. We have seen what has happened when the community feels powerless in its attempts to shape its educational institutions. If parents are excluded from management status, they can wield the power of the pocketbook. School bonds are defeated. Property tax revenues are reduced. Either way, there is power equaliz[illegible] or perhaps a swing of power in an opposing dir[illegible]. The fears of educators result in entrenchment, greater resistance, and a widening power imbalance. Each group seeks to improve its position relative to the other. Positions are hardened, and communication is stifled. Communication is most effective when two individuals or groups view themselves as equal in power (May, 1972); however, neither parents nor schools view the current relationship as equipotential. Distrust abounds, and money is used to balance information and skill.

Two factors influencing the nature of parent involvement have resulted from the massive changes in social patterns during the last 30 years. First, American society currently is made up of a large number of temporary organizations (Bennis & Slater, 1969). The old unwritten contract between parents and schools will no longer work because there is no stability in the relationship. The contract envisioned by the school differs from that envisioned by each parent since backgrounds are so diverse. This heterogeneity of values has resulted in an inability of parents and educators to live up to the expectations of the other. Parents bring old values into a new community and find that these values are not consistent with the views being expressed by others.

Second, parents today are much more educated than were parents of a generation ago. The current corps of parents benefited from the education boom of the 1950s and 1960s. The managerial relationship of a school to educated parents is qualitatively different from that of school to uneducated parents. Once again, the patient-doctor relationship provides a strong analogy. Patients no longer look upon the knowledge possessed by physicians as unfathomable. They wish to be informed about their conditions and the proposed treatment. Many hospitals have developed consent forms explaining in detail the procedures to be used and the possible consequences (Yeager, 1977). Such a movement is taking place in education as well. Parents have greater access to information about education. The media and legislators have been effective at removing some of the occult from the science of education. Educators no longer can sell the public a bill of goods based upon their ignorance. One of the results of this spate of educated parents is the long list of parental rights established by PL 94-142.

If a semblance of stability and reason is going to be restored, educators must adopt new techniques. Risk taking and honesty must become more extensive (Clements & Alexander, 1975).

A MODEL OF IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Are there techniques by which the influences of teachers and parents may be developed and resolved into a unidirectional force leading to improved educational effectiveness? Such techniques not only exist but are used by all people every day. Broadly defined, they include: definition of roles, compromise, negotiation, acceptance of responsibility, and mediation. All social contacts require use and acceptance of these techniques. Citizens of a nation accept the constraint of law because of the security it provides. Parents and educators can develop mutually agreeable role definitions because they perceive that over the long run the gains of such an agreement will far outweigh the losses of territory. Application of the techniques to be outlined will neutralize many of the problems mentioned in this article. The process is continuous and is nurtured by unending effort. It should not be entered into with visions of immediate or complete improvement. The process is people oriented, not systems oriented. As people change, the process will and must change. Thus, the processes discussed below concentrate on behaviors and responsibility rather than systems and resources.

The IEP as a Contractual Agreement

The present structure of IEP development and application is semi-contractual in nature. The school develops an IEP enumerating educational goals and services for the child. The parent consents to the IEP and may certify that consent by affixing a signature. The school then has the obligation (legal or ethical) of executing the promises made in the IEP. The result is (1) a carefully diluted IEP such that the school does not promise anything that may be out of the safe range of delivery possibility; (2) no obligation on the part of the parent to actively support the IEP; (3) a contract binding on only one party — the school; (4) a restriction on productivity. Of these, item two possesses the greatest negative potential. Other writers have recognized the possible ramifications of that phenomenon, especially in efforts to improve the effectiveness of inner city schools. Jackson (1978) states of his own Push for Excellence program that if parents want their children to learn, they must set the stage.

> Parents must pledge to monitor their child's report card . . . At the beginning of the year, the principal must give a "State of the School" address. It should clearly define educational goals, establish rules, set us expectations, and lay out a plan for achieving the goals by the end of the academic year (p. 1935).

Sewell (1978) echoes Jackson by the statement that parents must send their children to school realizing that they (parents) have responsibilities to the school. Poussaint (1978) and Haskins (1978) speak of the responsibility of the school to get parents involved, to go to the length of actively seeking parental involvement in school policy, and the specific educational programs of their children. These statements do not go far enough. They do not address the *hows* of such involvement. This deficiency may result in an attitude such as that encountered in the Yoshida et al. (1978) investigation. The IEP concept can be expanded to serve a more meaningful role in this regard.

If IEP's were developed jointly by parent and educator, rather than merely presented to parents to sign, and if the IEP were to enumerate specific parent responsibilities which, when faithfully followed, would increase the *probability* of academic success and allow for goals set at a higher level, and if the IEP specified a system for updating, monitoring, and negotiating, a true contractual, responsible relationship would exist.

The process involves four major steps. Each of these may be accomplished utilizing a number of specific approaches elaborated upon in the next section. The system is equally applicable to general education. The major steps are:

1. Parents in the community select a group of parents (no more than five) to represent them in meetings and negotiations with a committee of educators selected by the school system. These representatives may be selected from the entire population of parents, or if the process is to be utilized only for special education, just parents of exceptional children should be involved. The former is a much more desirable practice, especially since effective mainstreaming requires integration of general and special education. The efficacy is enhanced greatly if the process includes all education consumers.

2. The two groups develop and adopt a written statement of educational philosophy, goals, and values for the school system. Either group may present a statement as a basis for negotiation, or the groups may decide to generate a statement in concert and work out differences as they go along.

3. These goals and values are contractually agreed upon by both educators and parents, forming the basis for negotiation of IEPs between individual parents and IEP teams. Specific IEPs are developed in a similar manner — that is, parent and educators may submit goals for inclusion. Goals and services are negotiable among all members of the IEP team. There should be *no* IEP planning meetings to which the parents are not invited.

4. Individual parents and IEP teams develop specific plans written as contracts between the school and the parents. After a child has reached age 13, the IEP team may be expanded to include the student. The conditions under which students participate would follow general guidelines established by the district-wide committee. The depth of involvement would depend upon the individual team's perceptions of the student's ability to accept some responsibility for his or her own educational achievement. Thus, the student will be aware of expectations, will have the opportunity to express thoughts and, more importantly, to commit himself or herself to *responsible* behavior. This commitment would be difficult to obtain without seeking the student's input.

The plan should enumerate goals and target dates, review dates, and assign accountability for each goal or subpart. Parent and student responsibilities should be presented as they bear upon the success of educational goals and may include such things as assuring attendance, responsibility for homework, follow through on disciplinary activities initiated in school, and so forth. Criteria for success would be established for each goal, along with the attendant responsibilities of each person. The signatures of parents and educators would signify that each member agreed to perform in accordance with terms of the IEP contract. Thus, parents would share in the burden of accountability. Schools no longer would be in the lonely position of accountability without sufficient authority or influence, and the community would be less willing to demand services far beyond the resources available. Since parents would now be a part of the system, they should be more understanding of its limitations. Any failure in the program might be traceable to a specific element in the IEP or the incomplete execution of an enumerated responsibility by educator or parent. Parents would gain a role in establishing educational policy that they must have if education is to regain some lost support and educators gain a means for integrating the influences of parents and school. This is an achievement-oriented process — one in which continuous improvement is the goal. Problems will occur every day, but the educational efficiency should improve in recognizable steps.

Some parents may refuse to participate. This occurrence can be dealt with in any number of ways, none of which is entirely sufficient for the student. First, the school system may develop an IEP designed to get around the parent's nonparticipation (i.e., maximize whatever can be accomplished). Second, the school system could appoint a parent surrogate who would protect the interests of the student in IEP development. Finally — and this is a drastic measure — parents who refuse to participate in the education of their children might be deemed negligent, so community sanctions could be sought. Whatever the choice, it should be done within the guidelines set up by the district-wide parent-educator committee. In any event, fewer children will be "lost" because their parents refuse to participate than are presently falling through the cracks that exist because schools and parents have less than desirable means of communication and negotiation.

The model presented here also brings a new, more profound meaning to the IEP. There is no longer a reason for dilution. Adherence means increased productivity and a true contract. Some might argue that this innovation would be an intrusion into the sanctity of the family or that parents should not have a role in determining educational policy. The main argument against this logic is that the nature of child development and our educational programs demand such interaction. The two forces can be either complementary or competitive, but they cannot be maintained separately. How much better it would be if they were at least partly on the same wave length! The following section de-

scribes techniques that will enhance the chances of success of such a venture by providing stability for temporary systems, aiding in development of values and goals, and assisting in conflict resolution. The techniques are not presented in any specific order and should be integrated to achieve a comprehensive, coordinated approach.

Putting the Model to Work

Any approach to goal conflict resolution should not be based upon a "horse trading" philosophy. If this is representative of the initial environment, each group will seek to maximize its gain at the expense of the other. It usually is not necessary to have a victor and a victim. In most negotiations, both parties can emerge as benefactors — that is, with more than they started with. In some cases, the major initial gain is a decrease of distracting and time consuming conflict — conflict that prevents development of real effort toward any goal.

Each of the techniques explained below is more applicable under some sets of conditions than others. The techniques are not simple, but they have proven validity and generally long lasting results. In addition, they afford participants a feeling of equipotentiality. Teachers, administrators, and supervisors, as well as parents, must be involved in all training ventures.

Reality Therapy Training

Providing participants of parent-teacher groups with Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1965) training offers each member a powerful tool for use in dealing with irresponsible behavior. Behavior may be classified as either responsible or irresponsible. Responsible behavior is defined as fulfilling one's own needs without depriving others of the ability to fulfill theirs. Reality is that which makes for the best gain in the long run. Use of the reality therapy model is tantamount to establishing — a basic philosophy of human behavior within which the members of the group may operate. Thus, individuals must view themselves as responsible *to* the group but responsible *for* themselves. Excuses for irresponsible behavior are not acceptable. Therefore, at the meetings in which parents and educators develop the system-wide statement of philosophy, goals and values, reality may be defined in the following manner:

1. Parents have a right and responsibility in the process of education.
2. Parents cannot be excluded.
3. Educators have the expertise needed to develop the achievement of children.
4. The education system must be congruent with the surrounding community.

The remainder of reality is defined by the agreed upon philosophy, including the restrictions imposed by limited resources and state, federal, and local laws.

Responsibility is adherence to established standards or at least to established procedures to change standards. It also means accepting consequences when one has behaved irresponsibly. Thus, the peer group defines both reality and responsibility within the larger social context. The peer group also defines consequences for irresponsible behavior. As an example, part of the reality within which the parent-educator group must operate is fiscal. If parents are demanding a new program that will cost two million additional dollars while the community has reduced the revenues available to the education system, the parents are behaving irresponsibly. They have passed the boundaries of reality. A teacher who refuses to modify a particular classroom procedure to accommodate a child's special needs also is behaving irresponsibly, since reality presently requires the inclusion of exceptional children to whatever extent is possible, and certainly a modification of classroom procedure is well within the realm of possibility.

Reality therapy training is potent because it is present oriented, and since behavior control is internalized, it requires low maintenance effort. Acceptance of a milieu of reality and responsibility requires a great deal of initial effort. Participants must understand and accept the basic philosophy supporting the technique. Because the procedure has been eminently successful with many difficult populations (e.g., juvenile delinquents) and has found its way into presently acceptable systems of management, one has no reason to doubt its applicability in the context of this article.

Participants may not rely upon past prejudice to prevent goal attainment. Therefore, parents and teachers cannot define reality in terms of past teacher strikes or school bond defeats. Reality therapy is adult. People are expected to manage themselves. One of the characteristics of our educated society is the resistance of many people to external control. Education is supposed to lead to a greater self understanding, and reality therapy allows participants to maintain that posture. In fact, it bolsters it. The philosophy behind reality therapy is powerful. It provides a sane, dignified alternative to antagonism between parents and teachers. It is not easy but, then, ready mixed recipes have not been altogether effective.

Achievement Motivation Training

Another powerful tool is Achievement Motivation Training. Primarily envisioned and developed by David McClelland (1965, 1977), achievement motivation training attempts to develop a set of behaviors leading to increased achievement. Achievement motivation (symbolized as N ach) is maximized when: (1) goal setting is realistic and involves small steps; (2) the motivational syndrome (a set of specific behaviors) is developed; (3) cognition supports behavior; and (4) the group (peers) supports the behavior change. Some of the propositions of achievement motivation are:

1. The more a person understands the reasons and the possible outcome of a behavior change, the more likely it is to occur.
2. Progress is more likely if written records are maintained.
3. The greater the application of a new motive to real, everyday situations, the more likely the motive is to be increased.
4. Motives that lead to improvements in self-image are more likely to be sustained.
5. Group emotional support for change is necessary.

Application of the above premises to development of a joint parent-teacher effort is not difficult to imagine, nor is it untested. It has been successful in developing entrepeneurship in India and improvement in academic functioning of ghetto school children (McClelland, 1977). Simply stated, parents and teachers in a joint venture must: (1) set attainable goals for themselves (the group) and the system, (2) maintain written records, (3) develop among all members a concept of how specific effort will lead to goal attainment, (4) provide peer support to individuals attempting to modify behavior patterns, (5) select goals which, if attained, lead to improved status for all involved members, and (6) select goals that are reflected in improvement of the everyday lives of the members of the educational system. Achievement motivation training can be viewed as the elaboration and application of the IEP concept to development of the parent-educator management system.

An example of a situation in which achievement motivation principles can be applied may be helpful at this point. Suppose that a parent-educator group realizes that the facilities available (classroom area) are much too small for the number of students. Efforts to improve the situation would be most effective if: (1) goals included adding small increments of classroom space over set periods of time rather than looking for ways to totally eliminate the problem immediately, (2) participants understand the reasons why more space is needed, (3) written records are maintained, (4) credit is given to individuals who make a contribution toward goal achievement, and (5) progress is monitored by the group rather by than a single individual.

Another construct of human motivation lends support and additional insight into the process of achievement motivation training. Porter and Lawler (1968) developed an expectancy theory (VIE), which states simply that motivation as expressed by effort is a function of valence (V - the perceived potency of the goal or the reward), instrumentality (I - the perceived ability of the individual to perform the behaviors required to attain the goal), and expectancy (E - the perceived relationship between goal attainment and reward). Thus, in a parent-teacher effort, developing a contract, either group or individual is important — one in which: (1) established goals are important to both parties (valence), (2) both teachers and parents feel that they have the means to reach the goal (instrumentality), and (3) they feel that effort utilizing that means will result in accomplishment and reward (expectancy).

Each of the three factors may interact with the others in ways that may maximize or minimize the resultant effort. Thus, goals with high valence may be perceived as difficult to attain (instrumentality) and will need to be kept within realistic bounds. Low expectancy (of reward) will diminish effort toward any goal, no matter what its valence. Neglect of any of the factors will reduce the overall effort and result in discouraging performance. Parents and teachers should be cautioned against the desire for one great coup. Selection of goals should be executed with concern not only for the needs of the system but with ample attention to the motivational patterns of the participants.

Negotiation Processes

Despite good faith, lofty motives, and perceived unity of purpose, any group of 10 individuals is bound to encounter points of impasse — situations in which honest disagreement brings progress to a halt. At this point, negotiation processes should be initiated.

Harrison (1973) developed the process of role negotiation as a means by which individuals or groups may deal with conflict. Basically, role negotiation is a behavioral approach which assumes that people have differences and opposing interests. Conflict, competition, and maximization of one's own interests are natural. The alternative to continuous conflict as a consequence of the above phenomena is a negotiated agreement. The agreement is based upon a diagnosis of the rights, powers, privileges, and demands of the incumbents of each role with respect to each other. The targets of change are descriptions of duty, responsibility, authority, and accountability.

At any point in the process, then, parents or teachers may view a choice of goal as particularly favorable to one or the other. To prevent a perceived power imbalance, participants may rely upon role negotiation to reach a compromise. The power content may change but the balance remains intact. The result is an agreement to administer and/or withhold rewards or sanctions for compliance or violation of the new role descriptions. The parties must agree to a quid pro quo bargaining stance, and success depends upon sufficiently potent rewards or sanctions, the willingness of both parties to apply rewards or sanctions, and balance of rewards or sanctions created by third party intervention.

The latter point cannot be sufficiently attended to in this paper but must be addressed at least perfunctorily. The process of negotiation often leads to a need for a third party mediator. A parent-teacher committee should recognize this early in its organizational process and should adopt a set of procedures whereby a competent, experienced, impartial third party may be utilized. The cost will be minor when compared to hours lost in a frustrating deadlock. (Precedent has been established in the hearing officer requirements of PL 94-142.)

Attempts to deal with a particularly knotty problem in the IEP contract development process provides an insightful example of the application of role negotiation. In this example, a mother requests 10 hours of speech therapy per week for her child. The school views this request as beyond its capability. A negotiated alternative to this roadblock would be an offer on the part of the school to provide five hours of therapy per week in exchange for a commitment by the mother to a continuance of a reinforcement program at home. The roles of each participant have been redefined. Each has agreed to alter roles in exchange for a favorable role augmentation on the part of the other. Role negotiation may result in each participant taking on a new role to suit the other, a reciprocal reduction in role demands, or a combination of both. The possibilities are limited only by the creativity and tenacity of the participants.

Similar to role negotiation, *planned renegotiation* (Sherwood & Glidewell, 1973) is an organizational development technique involving cycles of: (1) sharing of information and expectations, (2) commitment to a set of expectations, (3) stability and productivity, and (4) disruption, which is a cue for renegotiation. The major differences between role negotiation and planned renegotiation are that: (1) the latter has built-in cycles and may be preplanned so that both parties can prepare for changes, and (2) the latter allows exploration of alternatives offered by both parties. Thus, the two parties agree to abide by the rules offered by one group for a set period of time, after which the other group has the option of changing the rules. Neither group may prevent renegotiation after one group has held the power.

Renegotiation may result in a change in rules or goals, or existing ones may be extended. In some cases,

the parties may agree to go by the standards promulgated by one view for a set period at the end of which the opposing view will reign, or the parties may merely agree to renegotiate. Planned renegotiation may be built into the model (i.e., all rules, roles, goals, etc. adopted must be reviewed and renegotiated at specific intervals), or it may be utilized at irregular periods to meet the need of the moment.

Returning to the example of role negotiation offered above, one can see how planned renegotiation also could be applied. The school might have an alternative to the lengthy therapy desired by the parent. Each party would agree to abide by the demands of the other for a set period of time. At the end of that time they would sit down with data collected under each condition and renegotiate the conditions for the next period. Perhaps in this example the school would be able to demonstrate that its alternative is as effective as the intensive therapy. This evidence then would be offered at a negotiation point, and the IEP would be altered accordingly.

Both role negotiation and planned renegotiation are effective tools to reduce the effects of conflict. They may be utilized simultaneously and in concert with the other techniques discussed above. Countless other techniques, too, might be employed. The major obstacle is the acceptance of new roles for the incumbent. Once that is accomplished, the vision is limitless.

Synthesizing the Techniques

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the parent-educator management system; and Figure 2 represents a model for the development of IEP contracts. These illustrations are offered only as general guides; the models should be adapted to suit specific needs of the participants. In Figure 1, the atmosphere for the entire process is comprised of reality and responsibility (as discussed previously). The process slows six stages, each of which is subject to recycling and negotiation as needed or at preplanned intervals. Thus, selection of parents and educators for the management team (1) may occur annually, but the restatement of individual goals (4) may occur weekly until a product (5) is generated. The evaluation and feedback stage (6) refers to evaluation of individual goal attainment; this stage may result in a recognition that a new reality exists (e.g. laws have changed, resources have been lost or gained, or community needs and values have been transformed). If such is the case, the new reality must be defined and the process recycled from stage 2. In some systems it may be desirable to integrate assessment of new realities into the evaluation stage. Thus, at times recycling may be as small as a two-stage recycle or as great as a six-stage recycle. The process can be adapted to the need.

Figure 2 represents a similar process but on a microcosmic level. Reality is defined by the product of the parent-educator management system — that is, the statement of values, goals, and philosophy. Recycling can occur as a result of changes in needs or abilities of the participants that impinge upon the product (stage 4) as a new reality that may affect the definitions upon which the process is based (stage 1).

Although the figures depict a linear sequence, each stage in actuality may exist concurrently with other stages. Therefore, an IEP may undergo renegotiation even as a new reality enters the picture or evaluation is taking place.

CONCLUSION

The processes and techniques presented in this paper can lead to what May (1972) termed "integrative power" — the power resulting from collaboration and cooperation. This type of power will not give parents all they want nor will it fulfill all teacher expectations. What will result is a closer approximation of the desires of both sides. Parent-teacher cooperation will result in greater response generalization on the part of children (Johnson & Katz, 1973). Highly educated parents will be more thoroughly satisfied with their relationships with the public schools because the schools will be at least partly of their design (Drucker, 1976). The end result is a development of mutual responsibility.

> All it (the school) can promise . . . is an opportunity to learn under favorable circumstances, with the help of a competent teacher and with a modest amount of essential equipment, including some good books. Whatever the program may be, it is the child who must do the learning. If this can be made clear to parents, their demands on the school may be modified, and perhaps they will accept greater responsibility for their own part in the child's education (Woodring, 1978, p. 517).

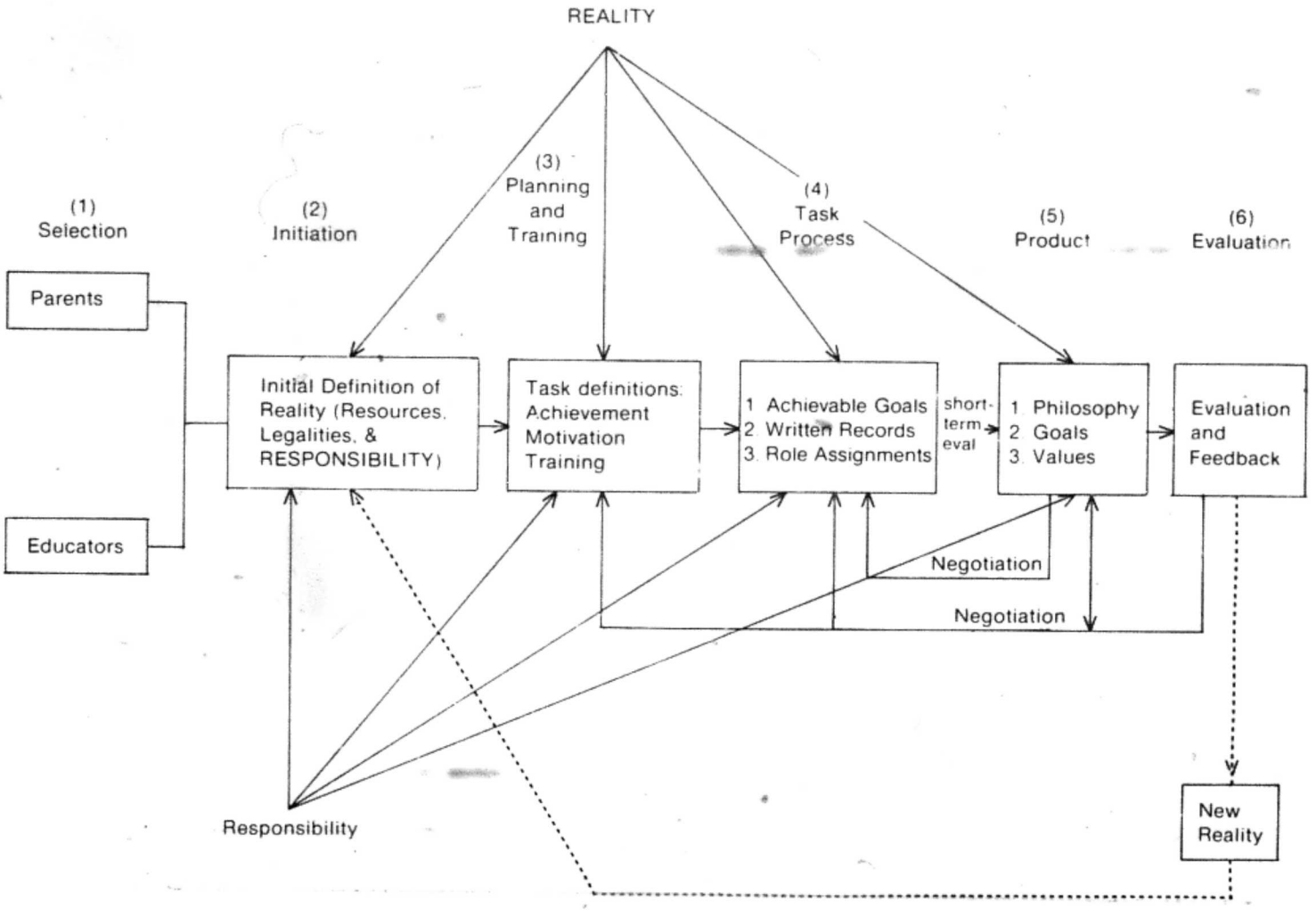
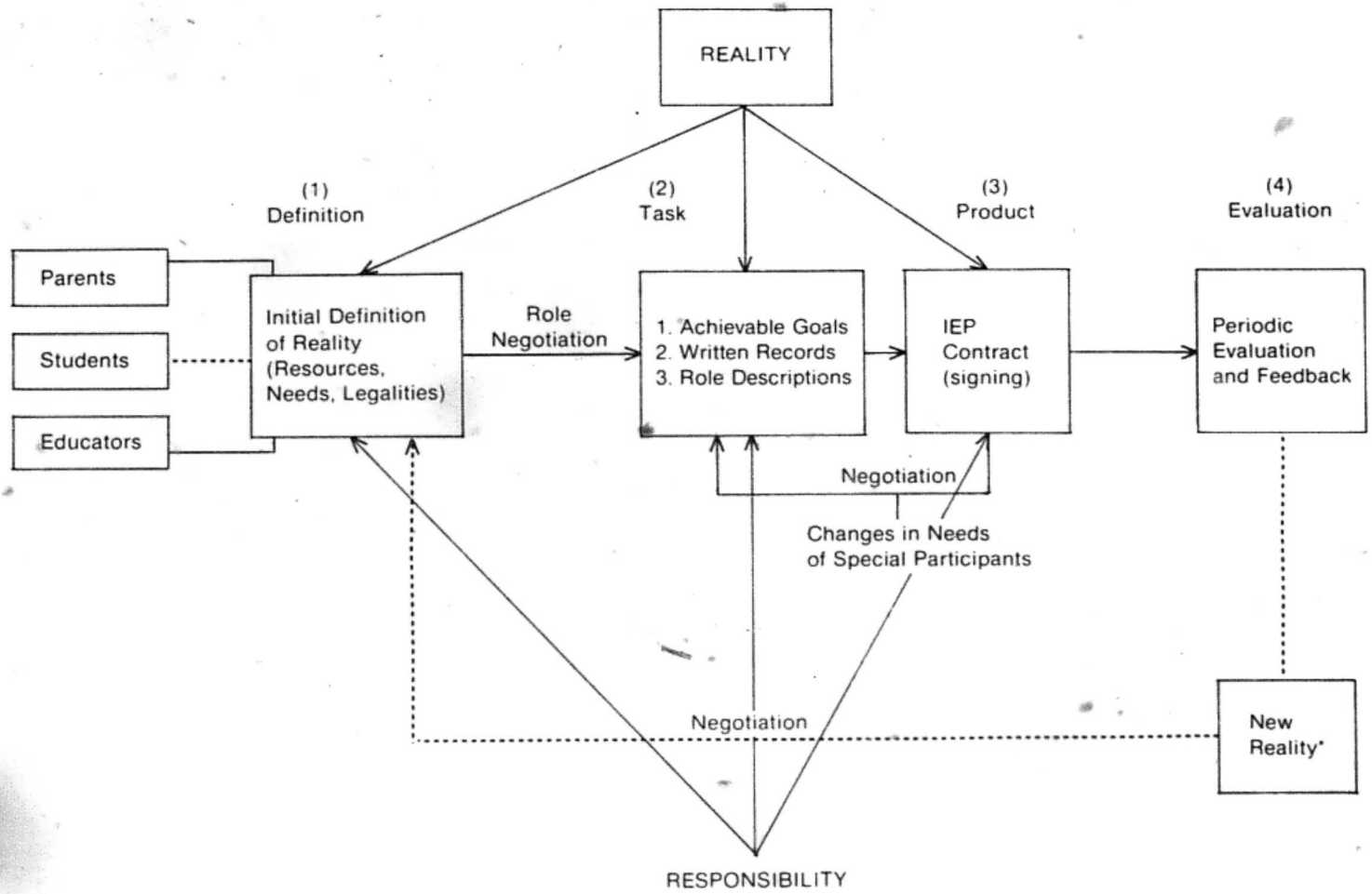


FIGURE 1. A Model for a Parent-Education Management System



*Originates in wider environment: new resources, change in community, etc

FIGURE 2. A Model for the Development of an IEP Contract

No one right path marks the goal of this paper — improved educational output through redefinition of the educator-consumer relationship. American public education must learn to interact efficiently and effectively with its environment. In order to do so, educators must take advantage of the phenomenon of equifinality — the ability of an organization to reach a goal by two or more different paths (Katz & Kahn, 1966). The path outlined in this paper is actually many paths. Utilization must conform to the needs and values of the people in the system to which it is to be applied. That it can be made to succeed is evidenced by the successes of developers of the specific techniques. Patience and realistic expectations are the key cautions. Educators must learn to treat themselves and parents with the same demeanor as suggested for exceptional children: Develop attainable short-term goals and provide sufficient reinforcement of long-range success.

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