PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study considers the attitudes of four educational constituencies toward parent involvement in elementary education in four schools in northwestern Alberta. The four constituencies are central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and parents. The study also considers the impact of Alberta's Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) model of parent involvement on these attitudes and considers the effect of these attitudes upon the formation and functioning of school councils.

Four questions were considered. What kind of parent involvement, if any, is supported by each constituency? Are these attitudes congruent with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement? Are the constituencies congruent in their attitudes? Are the members of each constituency congruent in their attitudes?

Three self-reporting questionnaires asked for attitudes toward parent involvement and for experiences with parent involvement in E.C.S. and in school. Respondents represented all groups within each constituency. Because administrators and teachers were not randomly selected, measures of significance were not calculated. The study included four schools, two in a Catholic jurisdiction which also operates its own E.C.S. program, and two in a County jurisdiction which has only recently offered E.C.S. programs. Parents in the County system have had experience with private E.C.S. operation. One small rural school and one large urban school from each jurisdiction were included in the study.

Constituency respondents in the large urban schools were more positive toward parent involvement than were those in the small rural schools in this study. Attitudes towards parent involvement appeared to be developed in E.C.S. and carried into school. All school administrators in the small schools in this study preferred to limit parent involvement to volunteer roles other than

decision-making.

Parents without E.C.S. executive experience were most likely to attend school meetings, while experienced parents preferred to be involved at the jurisdictional level. Parents whose experience with E.C.S. was five years ago were more supportive of involvement roles than were parents with recent involvement with E.C.S.

Teachers communicated with parents most often by telephone, but most of this communication was to report student problems to a minority of parents. Parents were not asked for input into school decisions.

School administrators and teachers in small schools were resistant to parent involvement in issues of teacher assignment and tenure, even though the majority of parents believed that influence over such issues was their right. This topic appears to have potential for conflict within school councils.

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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 1988, the Government of Alberta passed a new School Act. Contained within the Act were calls for new and increased opportunities for parent involvement in all aspects of education in Alberta, including significant opportunities for parents to be involved in decision-making roles. This increased emphasis upon parent involvement was said to be a response to political realities and to demands from parents for a more active role in their children's education (Government of Alberta, 1987).

Modifying the role of parents in education has implications for each of the educational constituencies. Administrators, both central office and in-school, need to accommodate the decision-making authority of parents. Classroom teachers need to recognize and accommodate the right of parents to question all aspects of the education of their children. Parents need to

clarify their own views about education and the role that they will fill within it.

The history of parent involvement in Alberta's education system has been focused upon its early childhood education (kindergarten) programs. In Alberta, kindergarten programs are organized and offered under the title Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.). These programs were designed to place parents in positions of responsibility and control over all aspects of program planning, implementation, and evaluation. In many instances, that control included staff selection, supervision and evaluation, and all other aspects of the operation of physical plant and the educational program (Alberta Education, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984b, 1985, 1986a, 1986b).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the degree of support for the call for increased parent involvement in education in Alberta as mandated within the new School Act. Further, this

study considers the possible impact of Alberta's fifteen year experiment with parent involvement within the Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) model upon this call for expansion of parent involvement.

The research questions are four. First, what kind of parent involvement, if any, is being supported by each of the educational constituencies? The groups to be included as educational constituencies are (a) parents both with and without experience with parent involvement in E.C.S., (b) teachers, (c) principals, and (d) superintendents and school system administrators. Second, is there congruency and consistency within this support as to the type of parent involvement preferred, and, if so, does it represent congruence or divergence from the type of parent involvement specified within E.C.S.? Third, is there congruency and consistency among different educational constituencies in these views? Fourth, is there congruency and consistency of view within each constituency?

Conceptual Framework

The Alberta School Act

The new Alberta School Act (1988) mandated increased parent involvement within three roles (i.e., School Councils in section 17, the Attendance Review Board in sections 108-112, and the Special Needs Tribunal in section 30). The school councils may be implemented in all schools, whereas the latter two types of parent involvement are intended to act as provincial appeal committees on select issues, so that the opportunities for parents to become involved in these two committees are very limited both in scope and in the numbers of parents to be appointed, although parents may appeal local school and board decisions to those committees.

For the school councils, the Act specified that (a) the school council may be formed in a school by parents of students attending that school, (b) the majority of members on the council must be parents of students attending that school, (c) the council may advise the principal or the

school board on any matter, or perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board, (d) the council may be dissolved by the parents, (e) the board shall make rules governing the establishing and dissolving of the council, and (f) the council may pass by-laws governing its operation and conduct (Alberta School Act, 1988, section 17).

The potential for parent involvement presented by these councils reflects the provincial government's stated view of the importance of parents in education in Alberta: "Because parents are a key partner in the education of children, their involvement is essential at almost every level of the educational system" (Government of Alberta, 1987, p. 14).

Early Childhood Services

For the past fifteen years, Alberta has been implementing early childhood education programs at the kindergarten level through Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) in a variety of formats and systems including both public and private operators. For all E.C.S. programs, Alberta Education regulations define an expectation for

parent involvement. These regulations state that parents have "the right and the responsibility" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p.1) to be involved in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This involvement is further defined to include a cooperative and coordinated partnership involving the parent, the teacher and the community focussing upon identification of the best possible manner in which to meet the needs of the individual child.

This study examines the influence that constituency experience with Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) may have had upon the development of the school council and other aspects of the new School Act as vehicles for meeting calls for increased parent involvement within the local school.

Evans (1975) held that the role of parents in early childhood education could be conceived "both in terms of <u>education</u>--the development of effective parenting skills--and <u>involvement</u>--the degree of participation in the major areas of decision-making about educational programming,

even to the point of participation in the instructional enterprise itself" (p. 358).

Within E.C.S., parent involvement is defined as "any activity which brings parents into a special relationship with their child, the child's teacher, or community resource persons through which the parent is enabled to assist their child's development and to experience personal growth" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 140). This parent involvement is to include (a) opportunities for parents to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to meet the needs of their children, (b) advisory and decision-making activities, (c) involvement as teacher of their own child in the home, and (d) involvement as a special resource, as a volunteer assistant to the program, in advocacy roles, and in program support functions.

This particular model of parent involvement is not the only model by which parents have access to roles within the operation of school systems. It is, however, the only model that has been developed within Alberta Education regulations to

place parents in a decision-making role with authority over program design, implementation, and evaluation within a program open to all children. In addition, regulations specify only general program philosophy, goals, and dimensions. It is left to this cooperative meeting of parents, teachers, and community to define the specific program content and student activities.

The only other regulations promoting active parent roles in determining program development are contained in the field of special education. Alberta Education's strong commitment to parent involvement is clearly stated in the Special Education Manual (Alberta Education, 1984c) which requires that "parents of a special education student are consulted and participate in decision-making in all aspects of procedures in the selection, placement and programming of the student's education" (p. 36). However, that final responsibility for such decisions is retained by the school is suggested in that manual's subsequent statement that it is acceptable if a parent chooses not to be involved, so long as "the

opportunity for involvement is available to them" (p. 36). Such an assumption for final authority by the school is not specified nor suggested within E.C.S. regulations, support documents, or procedures manuals.

Parent Involvement

The importance of effective parent involvement in early childhood education is well established. Hunt (1961), Bloom (1964), Meier (1978) and Berger (1986) insisted that parents were already involved as the primary educators of their children even before they went to the classroom and that the effect of their continued interest is readily apparent.

O'Connor (1986) held that improving family life for the under 5s will result in a very good chance of improving children's over-all performance later on in life. Hence, the integration of family life into kindergarten and the general school environment is an important factor in the learning potential of young children.

The importance of having parents involved in the support of student learning has also been identified. Tizard, Scholfield, and Hewison (1982) demonstrated that having an informed parent listen to a child read each night was of greater long term benefit for the child than was a specialist teaching at school.

Dembo and Vaughn (1989) observed that if mothers of learning disabled (LD) children were present when the child attempted to master a task, both the child and the mother rated the task as more difficult when the child succeeded than when they failed. This suggests that LD children may enhance their self-perception by succeeding on tasks perceived to be difficult in the presence of their mothers. In addition, mothers present during such success may "enhance the value of the performance, and thus, their children's achievement" (p. 205).

The characteristics of parents have also been considered for their influence on children. Maternal education levels have been shown to be a significant predictor of daycare children's

language development as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Goelman, 1989, p. 90).

Traditionally, parent involvement has occurred in peripheral or incidental ways, except in preschool education programs which have valued and implemented parent involvement (Hipple, 1975). This traditional view holds that education is the proper work of schools and teachers, with parents supportive to that process. Control of the education process is similarly retained by the school system.

Parent Involvement in Alberta

The establishment of the school councils in Alberta may have been conceived and mandated as a deliberate application of the E.C.S. model of parent involvement to the graded school. This possibility arises from Alberta Education discussion papers on the term "articulation" (which has been defined in several ways, even within the same discussion paper) which call for the extension of E.C.S. practices and philosophy

into Grades 1 to 6 inclusive (Alberta Education, 1988b).

In a 1988 report on enrolment trends by Alberta Education (1988a), it was reported that 95% of all children entering Grade 1 each year have attended E.C.S. It follows that 95% of the parents of children entering Grade 1 each year have had direct experience, or the potential for experience, with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. Because E.C.S. has been implemented in Alberta for the past fifteen years, it would follow that the majority of the parents of all children now in school have had varying degrees of experience with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement.

That a majority of parents have such experience does not necessarily imply that a similar percentage support the concept of parent involvement as it is implemented in E.C.S. and which appears to be a possible catalyst for the proposed school councils. A broader issue would be whether the concept of parent involvement of any type is supported by parents of school

children, and whether E.C.S. has had an effect upon that support, positively or negatively.

The scope for parent involvement, if the majority of parents do support increased parent participation, may vary from a desire to establish bases of power over the operation of the school or school system to a politically neutral role of classroom assistance to any other of the roles possible within the general term of "parent involvement" (Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, & True, 1977). That scope may also be congruent or divergent with the E.C.S. model.

Trends in Parent Involvement

Schools and Parents

Darlene James, a community school coordinator in Burnaby, British Columbia, identified five school-based reasons why few parents are involved in schools: (a) parent involvement introduces an element of uncertainty that threatens the stability preferred by schools as formal, highly centralized bureaucracies; (b) a dichotomy of goals between the parent's concern for the child

and the school's concern for the progress of the group; (c) some teachers' negative attitudes and beliefs about parents' willingness and ability to help; (d) a lack of training of teachers in how to work with parents, and of parents in how to work with their children at home; and (e) teachers' sense of territorialism that gives rise to a belief that if parents become involved in their children's learning, the professional status of the teacher may be jeopardized ("Parent Involvement," 1989).

Teachers and principals resistant to parent involvement may worry that untrained parents might unwittingly interfere with teaching, or that disagreements might disrupt the learning environment. Some argue that "involving parents is a time-consuming luxury that places yet another burden on already overworked (and underpaid) teachers and principals" (Henderson, 1988, p. 149).

Rasinski (1989) summarized teacher perceptions of the "parents-as-the-problem" (p.

226) that inhibit increased parent involvement in reading instruction programs:

> Teachers have described pushy and overly aggressive parents, parents who are difficult to contact, and parents who resist teachers' recommendations. Teachers have likewise described parents who neglect their children intellectually as well as physically, and parents who attempt to censor the reading material in a classroom. (p. 226)

Countering this hesitancy to involve parents is a growing realization by school personnel of the importance of gaining parent support for the school and its programs. The National Committee for Citizens in Education, in 53 case studies, found that "parent involvement in almost any form appears to produce measurable gains in student achievement" (Henderson, 1988, p. 149). Cullingford (1985) held that, apart from politicians, teachers are the most attacked people in society, because "there is a widespread, instinctive belief, quite apart from a mass of evidence, that teachers do have an impact on the ills or well-being of society" (p. 11). In response, teachers are encouraging parents to join

the learning situation so that teachers can justify to parents the content of their program and the manner in which it is implemented.

Bond (1973) recalled Lady Plowden's endorsement of the value of parent involvement:

> The ultimate responsibility for the child rests with the parents and that child will develop his full potential only if the education has the full support of the parent. To give this, the parent must be recognized as an equal partner by the teacher and must know and understand what it is the school is doing. (p. 46)

Williams and Stallworth (cited in Henderson, 1988) reported that parents were eager to be involved in schools in a variety of roles. These roles included classroom aide, tutor, committee member, and decision-maker.

Yanok and Derubertis (1989) considered the type and degree of parent involvement resulting from American legislation requiring such involvement by parents of special education students. They found that although the percentage of parents of such children who reported being contacted by the school was much greater than for other parents, "the impact of [legislation] has

been limited to increasing communication between school and home without enhancing the educational involvement of parents" (p. 198).

Mayfield (1987) questionned the validity of including a requirement for parent involvement in early childhood education, given that "not enough is yet known about how parent participation works to warrant global conclusions about its effectiveness and potential" (p. 12), and especially about "the effects of different models of parent participation early childhood programs on families with specific characteristics" (p. 13). Mayfield also raised a question of geographic transferability that may be equally applicable to a transfer of the concept of parent participation across time "without provision for reassessment, modification, and adaptation to local needs, conditions, and cultures" (p. 16).

Tangri and Moles (Secada, 1989) found that parent involvement with the school had benefits including increased parent satisfaction with the child's educational program, better home-school relations, enhanced ability of schools to offer

education and other services to students, better focus of parental efforts to help children with homework, reduced absenteeism, enhanced motivation, and improved student achievement. The amount of benefit gained from parent involvement, however, depended on the type of involvement, the length and intensity of involvement, the racial and ethnic background of parents, and the grade level of the student.

Vogel (1975) compared the actual self-reported roles of parents within E.C.S. with parents' preferred or desired roles. Parents preferred to be engaged in activities related to parental growth and instructional support, and least preferred administrative and decision-making roles. That their reported involvement was consistent with these preferences may suggest that parents were engaging only in their preferred areas of involvement.

It becomes of interest in this study, therefore, to identify where the support for parent involvement lies. It is also important to determine whether all members of an educational

constituency share the same vision of what parent involvement is or ought to be, and whether they share in the call for extending parent involvement within public education. It is also important to educational planners and leaders to know if these views are consistent with those held by other constituencies and if they are promoted and supported by those other constituencies.

Teachers and Parents

Berger (1986) identified the teacher as central to the success of parent involvement in the educational process. Supportive teacher roles included facilitator, teacher, counsellor, communicator, program director, interpreter, resume developer, and friend. When asked in a 1983 Gallup Poll to describe the ideal teacher, parents stressed communication, patience, moral character, personality, dedication, enthusiasm, intelligence and a deep caring for students (Berger, p. 94). Fulfilling such expectations is not an easy task, and Berger acknowledged that many schools and parents fail:

> That the majority of parents attend schools only when requested indicates that there is still a great deal schools and parents can do to become partners in the educational process. (p. 102)

The distinct philosophy and nature of E.C.S. as compared to public education does not guarantee that school administrators and grade school teachers will share the commitment to and enthusiasm for parent involvement, even when E.C.S. is made an adjunct to the school system and its operations.

Leitch and Tangri found that parents and teachers shared a general lack of knowledge about the ways in which they could work together. They also identified primary barriers to positive home-school relationships, including "stereotypes, misperceptions, and a failure on the part of both parents and teachers to recognize mutual needs" (Heid & Harris, 1989, p. 26).

Epstein (1988) found that "teachers' practices--rather than the education, marital status, or work-place of the parents--contribute significantly to making parents productive partners in their children's education" (p. 132).

She also found that having parents active at the school "influenced teachers to use more parent involvement in learning activities at home" (Epstein, 1985, p. 20), but that "parent activity at the school did not significantly affect parents' reactions to the school program or evaluations of the teacher's merits" (Epstein, 1986, p. 290).

Epstein (1986) found that fewer teachers supported parent involvement in upper elementary grades than in primary grades, so that parents' skills in supportive involvement activities were not developed and the rate of parent involvement declined as the child progressed through school. She also observed (1985) that little is known about effective parent involvement after the elementary grades because most research on parent involvement has been conducted at the preschool and primary grade levels.

Mensink and Sawatzky (1989) upheld parent involvement as a means to changing family processes supportive to the child's educational success. Further, they concluded that "family

form may be less important than family process (relationship patterns) to children's functioning" (p. 252). However, they also noted that "teachers and parents expect children from one-parent and and remarried families to show problems" (p. 250) even though actual classroom experience did not support such a universal assumption. Thus, it may be that "children are less influenced by family form than [are] their teachers or parents" (pp. 250-251).

School Administrators and Parents

Studies of school administrators (Ewanyshyn & Konrad, 1988; March & Miklos, 1983) identified the principal as the primary implementer of curricular change within a school system. Principals also have been shown to respond to parent demands in making such decisions, and to view their positions as ensuring the continued legitimation of the school through enforcing proper public conduct of teachers (Stetter & Willower, 1985). Few studies appear to have considered the broader contexts of parent involvement and the congruence or divergence of such views that are held among the

educational constituencies and their respective members.

Lyons, Robbins, and Smith (1983) found that teachers and principals who knew parents by virtue of their participation in school activities treated those parents with greater respect. They also showed more positive attitudes toward the children of involved parents. Administrators who found out about parents' concerns through parental involvement in the school were in a position to respond to those parental needs. Thus, parent involvement allows parents to influence and make a contribution to the education of their children.

It is important within this study to clarify the role of educational leaders as being either passive respondents to such parental influence or active initiators of change congruent with parental wishes. The Alberta School Act, with its call for increased parent involvement, could be supporting the active influence of parents and administrators upon education, or it could be reducing the significance of administrative leadership by reinforcing parental influence and

the resulting passive response by school administrators.

Significance of the Study

Evolving societal trends suggest that expectations for parent involvement consistent with the society for which Alberta's E.C.S. was originally designed may no longer be relevant:

> For good reasons as well as bad, a generation of parents has been reinventing marriage, reinventing the concept of "career" to include females, and trying to reinvent parenthood. Unfortunately, no one has reinvented childhood--nor the critical role of parents as first teachers, providing preschoolers with that "hidden curriculum of the home" on which schools have always depended. Now that both Mom and Dad are working outside the home most of the day, the loss of that informal curriculum is all too apparent. (Sava, 1989)

Alberta's E.C.S. program has not been made mandatory, although the overwhelming majority of children do attend E.C.S. programs. This voluntary nature of E.C.S. has lead to the proliferation of private E.C.S. operators catering to diverse parent views of early childhood education. Lack of a mandated program has enabled

each of these operators to initiate varied approaches to the generalized goals of E.C.S.

"Operator" is the legal entity or organization, properly constituted under corporate law, to whom public funds can be transferred for the provision of an E.C.S. program. The operator may be a school board as defined within the School Act (a public E.C.S. operator) or it may be a group of parents and others who have been elected or otherwise selected to form that legal body (a private E.C.S. operator). Many public and Catholic school jurisdictions are extending their systems to include the operation of E.C.S. programs, in some cases assuming the operation of previously private E.C.S. programs.

Alberta Education regulations for E.C.S. programs require the parent involvement model for all public and private operators. Applying a particular model of parent involvement to diverse family organizations and realities cannot be assumed to result in universal success.

Family socio-economic status and religion appear to affect both the outcomes of parent

involvement and the type of involvement parents have with the school. Goelman (1989) cautioned that data suggesting a high degree of continuity in children's language development provided by "two-parent, middle-class families and the high-quality daycare and nursery settings they select for their children" (p. 92) cannot be generalized to other family configurations and program models. Coleman's (cited in Henderson, 1988) comparison of public and private schools found that Catholic schools were more successful "because they have a different relationship to their community [than do public schools]" (p. 152).

That practice related to parent involvement in school programs in Alberta schools still differs from the preferred E.C.S. model is suggested by parent responses collected during a school evaluation conducted by Alberta Education in January of 1989 (Alberta Education, 1989). While a majority (82.5%) of the 40 parents felt encouraged to contact the school about their child's progress, only 55% felt encouraged to

become involved in the educational program. A slim majority (55%) felt that their views and opinions on school matters would be considered if parents brought them forward to the principal and staff.

The same survey of parent opinion raised questions about the degree of parent support for increasing parent involvement in schools. While less than half (47.5%) of the respondents agreed that the current level of parent involvement seemed appropriate, 40% were undecided or had no opinion on that question.

Alberta Education has issued and is proceeding with the implementation of position papers on articulation and on continuity of children's learning experiences, both of which are upward extensions of aspects of E.C.S. philosophy and practice, and which emphasize increased opportunities for parent involvement. The policy statement on articulation (Alberta Education, 1988b) calls for education program continuity from E.C.S. through to the end of grade six.

The degree to which the educational constituencies share in support for parent involvement, particularly as it is defined within the E.C.S. model, may also be indicative of the degree and locus of support for extension of parent involvement into "almost every level of the educational system" (Government of Alberta, 1987, p. 14).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the research and literature on three aspects of this study. The first aspect is that of the educational constituencies and the importance of congruency of constituency attitudes upon educational change. The second aspect concerns the history of the development of parent involvement in elementary education. The third aspect is the history of Alberta's Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.).

The Educational Constituencies

The concept of the educational constituencies was suggested by Reid (1985) as a way to explain how change, even quite rapid change, may be possible in circumstances where the structures of schooling seem to embody only obstacles to evolution. He posited the identification, structure, function, and influence of the constituencies in educational reform as the key to the restructuring of the English sixth form and

the emergence of a national system of education in Britain during the nineteenth century:

> In the absence of visible legal frameworks which legitimate certain kinds of curricular arrangement, or which define whose view of appropriate arrangements shall prevail, the question of what gains support and why is clearly a question about the publics or constituencies which actually pay for education and about their motives for doing it. (p. 296)

The membership of an educational constituency is comprised of "people who believe that they have interests in common which can be served by certain kinds of more or less uniform curricula" (p. 294). Further, "the picture is also complicated in that, once education is legally promoted and controlled, constituencies can act through local and national political systems as well as in direct concert with schools" (p.309).

The importance and impact of educational constituencies can be developed from Schwab's (1978) concept of the curriculum development process. Schwab argued that curriculum could not be developed completely and adequately by scholars alone. Instead, he believed that five disciplines

were necessary, and that the possessors of those disciplines needed to work in collaboration. Specifically, they "must learn to honor these various groupings of concerns, values, and operations, and to adapt and diminish their own values enough to make room in their thinking for the others" (Schwab, 1978, p. 365). By doing so, common interests and objectives would develop to serve all five of the disciplines equally.

Schwab held that curriculum development required input from subject matter specialists, child development specialists, teachers, and curriculum specialists. He also argued that these four alone could not develop curriculum without considering the milieus within which the child's learning would take place and in which that learning would later be applied.

Applying the concepts of parent involvement and of educational constituencies to Schwab's curriculum development model enables us to select from Schwab's listing of milieus those most likely to be essential for consideration in this particular study:

> These milieus include the school and classroom in which the learning and teaching are supposed to occur...the relations of teachers to one another and to the educational leaders of the school...the family, the community, the particular groupings of religious, class or ethnic genus...other genera which constitute the town or city...the conditions, dominant preoccupations, and cultural climate of the whole polity and its social classes. (pp. 366-367)

Reid traced the effect of congruence of interests among the educational constituencies upon the successful and general reform of the English sixth form during the nineteenth century. Because all of the educational constituencies shared a common interest in maintaining the sixth form as a uniting influence within society and within the British Empire, the redefinition of admission opportunities and curricula was accomplished without public outcry or rebellion.

The effect of divergence within the educational constituencies was chronicled by Edelstein (1986) in Iceland's experiment with social sciences reform between 1974 and 1984. Curriculum reformers undertook to redefine the social sciences and the methodologies used to

introduce them to students. Traditional values were replaced with inquiry of comparative social structures. Without consistent and common constituency interests, the curricular reform faced increased opposition from parents, community members, church leaders, and, finally, politicians who ended the reform process.

The concept of educational policy and practice being the product of response to congruent input from the educational constituencies can be grounded in educational theory. Tosi and Carroll (1976) expressed the imperative facing administrators to ensure that their system or organization must remain congruent with the expectations of the milieu:

> All organizations are in an active relationship with their environments. Just as any organism...must learn to adapt to its environment or perish, so too must organizations...[Therefore] managers will find it necessary to reassess continually the relationship of the organization's structure and goals to the values of the various publics, internal and external, with which it interfaces. (pp.155-156)

LaRocque (1986) examined the constituency relationships within a large school district in

Western Canada as revealed by the policy implementation process. LaRocque suggested that the school board perceived the focus for change efforts to be the policy statement itself, spending many hours refining the policy wording but no time at all "considering its implementation or specific changes resulting from the policy" (p. 492). When the Board perceived that the school constituencies were reluctant to implement parent advisory committees as specified by policy, its response was "to create another policy making these committees mandatory" (p. 492).

LaRocque perceived that the Board expected its central office administrators to achieve policy implementation, and these central office administrators, in turn, expected shool administrators and teachers to comply. When resistance to policy arose, it was attributed to "the non-involvement of principal and teacher representatives" (p. 493) in policy development. Teachers were reluctant to support a policy calling for parent advisory committees "because the policy mandated the kind of relationship the

school was to have with the community and increased the likelihood of public interference in matters of professional concern" (p. 495).

LaRocque's study revealed a key misconception about the ability of officials to ensure compliance of constituencies who do not share the vision encompassed by policy statements. LaRocque concluded that:

> The examples of implementer reactions to the policies demonstrate that their cooperation cannot be assumed and that the legal authority of the policy makers is not sufficient to ensure compliance. Negotiation and bargaining become important activities in the implementation process. (pp. 493-494)

Fris and Balderson (1988) applied the concept of contingency imperative to the role of administrators in school systems and found that the primary focus of both superintendents and principals was upon internal organization but that they also demonstrated a willingness to respond to a variety of pressures from a wide variety of individuals and groups in the external environment. Pinar and Grumet (1981) held that the superintendent's primary interest is to

depoliticise each of the constituencies by maintaining harmony among its diverse parts, thereby preventing "those interest groups from forming who might demand that they be allowed to influence curriculum decisions" (p. 21).

Ewanyshyn and Konrad (1988) and March and Miklos (1983) examined the perceived degree of control held by administrators over decisions within a variety of school and system-based functions. The principal was viewed to have the highest overall mean ranking in perceived control and in preferred control over such decisions, including parent involvement.

Payne (1988) identified parental influence as part of a district's system of formal and informal controls upon its principals, and found that "principals are anxious to demonstrate they have parental support, are very responsive to parents, sensitive to their concerns, and try to keep parents satisfied" (p. 8). However, the influence of parents upon the principal is also moderated by the principal's attempts to balance it with the influence of superordinates and others.

Stetter and Willower (1985) found that secondary school principals saw legitimation and the degree of confidence accorded to the school to be the primary reason for concern about public opinion. Further, "every individual and interest group has a legitimate right to criticize these organizations that have stewardship over the community's children" (p. 9).

In summary, these studies focussed upon what might properly be called the power and influence of administrators, teachers, and parents as educational constituencies operating within the curricular and operational functioning of educational institutions. Parent involvement and participation is seen as having considerable influence upon these institutions.

Roles for Parent Involvement

Aristotle believed that prior to age five, the child should remain at home, and that no demand should be placed upon the child for study or labour, "lest its growth be impeded" (Hutchins,

1952, 9, p. 541). During this time, the Directors of Education are to oversee the raising of the young, to ensure that they are not exposed to vulgar, tiring or effeminate amusements, that they are not checked when they cry out or scream, that they are not allowed to repeat or hear indecency of speech. The state's careful overseeing of early childhood is essential to the child's future role in assuring the ongoing welfare of the state. The role of the parent in education is distinct from that of the state: "there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble" (p. 543).

Thomas Aquinas prescribed to parents the obligations "to educate their children by instructing them in the faith...Moreover, they are commanded to teach them the right rules of conduct" (Hutchins, 20, p. 319). However, while Aquinas recognized that for a man to be drawn to virtue, he must receive this training from another, some men require the force of laws to

bring them to the virtuous life (Hutchins, 20, p. 227).

Luther believed that parents were unqualified to educate their children and preferred the employment of trained teachers to conduct religious and moral lessons (Braun & Edwards, 1972). John Locke ascribed a duty to parents to take care of their offspring during the "imperfect state of childhood" (Hutchins, 35, p. 37). Further, the role of the father is to govern the will as well as actions, until such time as the son attains the age of nonage, usually twenty-one but sometimes earlier, at which time the son and the father become equals, "whether they be only in the state and under the law of Nature, or under the positive laws of an established government" (p. 37).

In contrast, Adam Smith called for the state to provide education to all of its children, as he distinguished between the advantages of the rich to provide for the education of its children and the realities of the poor who "can scarce afford to maintain them even in infancy" (Hutchins, 39,

p. 342). The value of basic education of all children is to the state. According to Smith:

> In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it." (p. 343)

This education by the state for its own future benefit would not replace the existing social order, for "the common people cannot, in any civilised society, be so well instructed as people of some rank and fortune" (p. 342). Further, basic instruction in the "most essential parts of education...to read, write, and account, can be acquired at so early a period of life that the greater part even of those who are to be bred to the lowest occupations have time to acquire them before they can be employed in those occupations" (p. 342).

Rousseau similarly prescribed the state's dominance over education:

> as the reason of each man is not left to be the sole arbiter of his duties, government ought the less indiscriminately to abandon to the intelligence and prejudices of fathers

> the education of their children, as that education is of still greater importance to the State than to the fathers; for...families dissolve, but the State remains. (Hutchins, 38, p. 376)

Rousseau equated previous failures to establish such state-controlled education as a product of the world being "divided into nations too great to admit of being well governed" (p. 377), a fault to be corrected with his vision of political economy. The role of the parent in education was to be exercised through that of the collective and shared role of citizen, so that "children are brought up in common in the bosom of equality...to become in time defenders and fathers of the country of which they will have been so long the children" (p. 376).

By the late nineteenth century, this concern for the future benefits arising to the state of the education of young children was leading to the formulation of early childhood education within the naturalism theory of Rousseau (Lee, 1953). The structure and content of such education was also being clarified.

Pestalozzi suggested that young children needed opportunities for active involvement, object lessons, sensory learning and oral language development as the basis or substructure for later learning. Schools should reflect the characteristics of a good home, for the ideal educational institution was the home. Parents had an obligation to begin the educational process, and, unlike earlier writers, Pestalozzi ascribed these duties to the mother: "As the mother is the first to nourish her child's body, so should she, by God's order, be the first to nourish his mind" (Pestalozzi, 1951, p. 26).

This emerging emphasis upon the parent's role in the early education of children was given further focus by Froebel. He influenced much of European and North American educational thought with his work in learning theory, teaching strategy, curriculum development, materials specification, the value of experiential learning, the use of teacher aides, the impact of cultural deprivation, and teacher training, all related to children below six (Range, Layton & Roubinek,

1980). Heralded as the father of kindergarten, Froebel also identified a new role for mothers--that of teacher's aide in the early childhood classroom.

Through the 1860's, much of the thought on early childhood education in North America reflected the influence of Froebel. The importance of early education was accompanied by awareness of individual differences existing among children. These natural stages of development made the education of bodies and characters more important than intellect, per se. The use of concrete learning materials and learning experiences as the basis of learning was preferred over highly verbal exercises, as were activities in which children were free to express interests and to fulfill personal needs. Froebelian early childhood education was to include many varied opportunities for play, and throughout the program, familiar experiences were to be included because these were judged to be extremely important in the total development of young children. Throughout, parents were to be included

in both formal and informal aspects of the early childhood education program (Range, Layton & Roubinek, 1980, p. 5-7).

Through the century from the 1830's to the 1930's, the maturational theory posited by Rousseau and developed by Froebel spread across North America. In 1860, Elizabeth Peabody and Mary Mann opened the first English language kindergarten in America, and based upon Froebel's concepts their belief that teachers ought to be friends with their charges and therefore to abstain from punishing them (Osborn, 1975). In 1873, Susan Blow based her curriculum on Froebel when she opened the first permanent public kindergarten in the United States. Froebelian early childhood education theory combined with these practical models of application to define kindergarten as it was to be implemented in Canada.

Also during that era, William T. Harris identified the relationship between this emerging early childhood education model and the traditional roles of state-sponsored education:

> [Kindergarten children] were, in Harris's terms, at the levels to be 'taken safely' to the level of mature insight into the absolute nature of things. Kindergartens...were a perfect environment for that development to occur. But beginning in the first grade, things would change for these children as they arrived at the age of reason or were ready to begin learning the absolute nature of things. (Range, Layton & Roubinek, 1980, p. 9-10)

This separation of kindergarten education was affirmed by Dewey who specified no teaching of reading prior to age 8 and the completion of the preparatory period (Smith, 1965), and by Morphett and Washburne who, in 1931, demonstrated that children with mental ages beyond 6.5 years experienced fewer failures in learning to read than children less mature. The effect was the inclusion of readiness in the first grade as part of the reading program but agreement that such a move was not recommended for kindergarten. Grade 1 materials were developed around scope and sequence charts developed by curriculum and learning specialists. First grade teachers paced children through the materials to be learned rather than allowing children's success to set the

pace. Kindergarten was left to follow the maturational theory:

> With the advent of graded classrooms, graded materials and principals or supervisors (who also helped standardize teaching practices for the masses), few of the progressive education techniques could be employed. The supposition that learning should be likened to play, that children should be allowed to grow and develop naturally, and encounter new experiences as they were ready, were beliefs that did not fit well into educational designs beyond the kindergarten. (Range, Layton & Roubinek, 1980, p. 12)

During the first half of the twentieth century, child development experts working in the area of early childhood, proclaimed that rearing children was not instinctive and that parents needed reinforcement and guidance (Fisher, 1933). Popular magazines included articles reinforcing the importance of providing a good home environment for children. New theories of discipline and child-rearing were espoused. Many of these were contradictory, so that although they meant to educate parents, they contributed to parent frustration and feelings of inadequacy and ineptness.

In 1922, Abigail Eliot opened the Ruggles Street Nursery in Boston. Placing her emphasis on the family as a partner in the education of children, she espoused the philosophy that if parents wanted to participate in the education of their children, they should share the responsibility. In her program, parents shared ideas and discussed topics of common interest (Taylor, 1981).

A new aspect of parent participation had been introduced, one that Gruenberg developed in his 1927 Outlines of Child Study: A Manual for Parents and Teachers. This manual provided guidelines for speech development, obedience, discipline, adolescence, emotional and intellectual development. Each chapter included follow-up discussion suggestions for both parents and teachers, with an outline of references for further reading.

A political role for parents within education emerged with the founding of the PTA in 1897. This first American organization of parents originated with concerns about child labour laws

and general health and welfare issues, but later became concerned with the need to provide the best possible education for children. Parent education and involvement was becoming an institutionalized part of the school system.

The expansion of parent organizations led to the formation of the National Council of Parent Education in 1925. This organization was funded by state or federal sources along with child development studies and parent education training programs.

In Canada, schools of education at McGill and the University of Toronto identified as goals research on the development of children, training of professionals for services for and research on children, and dissemination of information and education of parents (National Society for the Study of Education, 1929). Universities and institutions established nursery schools to assist with research in parent/child interactions. Their findings and publications stressed the importance of parent/child relationships and of parent participation in early childhood education in

exploring the growth and potential of the young child.

In 1934, the journal Parent Education was first published. In 1946, Benjamin Spock's The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care was published. The Children's Bureau published Your Children from 6 to 12 in 1949. In 1950, Erik Erikson published Childhood and Society and J. L. Hymes released Effective Home-School Relations. In 1952, Piaget's The Origin of Intelligence in Children was translated into English.

As part of the Plowden Report, Wiseman (1967) examined the relationship between environmental variables and school attainment: "The most important of our findings...is the demonstration that the major forces associated with educational attainment are to be found within the home circumstances of the children" (p. 23). Wiseman calculated that while the school (18%) and the neighborhood (20%) contributed to the child's attainment, the home contributed 62%. Further, he deduced that parental attitudes towards education had a stronger influence on the child's

development than did the socio-economic status of the home.

During the 1960's and 1970's, much research on the development and standard of children's abilities at school reflected upon the type of relationship the child had experienced with parents in the home. Hunt (1961), Bloom (1964), Gordon (1969), Sharrock (1970), and Datta (1973) all produced evidence that from birth, the child is developing socially, mentally, physically and emotionally. Bloom suggested that by age 4, the child had developed 50% of his/her intelligence, as measured at age 17.

In spite of this recognition of the importance of parents in the educational attainment of children, the 1950's, 60's and 70's saw schools resisting parent involvement and participation. Gordon (1969) reported that early childhood educators were severely challenged by politicians in 1967 for using federal funds to "teach mothers to play with their babies":

> [Parent involvement] appeared to decline, along with parent-teacher communication, during the 1960's,

> however, which brought consolidation, centralization, and desegregation. During the 1970s and 1980s, phenomena such as working parents, numerous family and job demands, an increase in divorce and the number of single-parent families, greater mobility, and desegregation hastened the decline of parent involvement, in spite of mounting evidence that parental participation generally helps children learn. (Bennett 1986, cited in Heid & Harris, 1989, p. 26)

In spite of this diversity of social changes affecting the relationship of parents and schools, Topping (1986) saw a resistance to increased parent involvement arising from the curricular models established in schools: "In a way, then, the development of formalized education in schools served largely to rob parents of a function they had carried out for millenia" (p. 1).

Within early childhood education, educators continued to work with parents, aiming to enhance the child's development and to strengthen the bonds of family life. The benefits apparent from such work continued to support calls for increased parental roles in education.

Tangri and Moles (Secada, 1989) identified three dimensions of parent involvement: (a) service in school, including school governance,

aides, volunteers; (b) home-school relationship through communications, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, parent education and training provided by the school; and (c) support of student learning at home through assisting with homework, tutoring and providing educational enrichment.

Bauch, Vietze, and Morris (1973) identified three forms of parent participation which they saw as being part of most early childhood education programs. Parent participation could be aimed at assisting parents in a role of education facilitator for their children. This form of participation contributed to the skills, knowledge and attitudes of parents so that their effectiveness as parents and as teachers of their own children could be increased. Parent participation could also have mutual benefit to parents and to the early childhood program when parents served as classroom aides and substitute teachers. The third form of parent participation occurred in support of the program. Parents supplemented the program's budget through such

activities as furniture building, outdoor supervision, and fund-raising.

Epstein (1988) identified five types of parent participation that appeared to result in improved student achievement: "(1) providing for the basic physical and psychological needs of children; (2) responding to communications from the schools; (3) participating at school; (4) participating in learning activities at home; and (5) participating in educational governance and advocacy" (p. 27).

Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, and True (1977) identified six major roles for parents to participate: an audience to observe the classroom activities, teachers of their own children, classroom volunteers, adult learners developing knowledge and skills through program involvement, paid paraprofessionals, and decision makers. In an earlier work, Gordon (1970) proposed that parent involvement must differ significantly from previous practice in which educators believed that "the school system must take the initiative in the creation of...parent involvement" (p.25).

Further, Gordon believed that "many parents are now demanding that the school change to become more what parents want" (p.71).

To reconcile these two positions, Gordon proposed that "parent involvement must somehow mean involvement of parents in partnership arrangements stressing the needs, strengths, concerns, and special knowledge the parents have and utilizing the expertise of the professional" (p.73). Landerholm and Karr (Heid & Harris, 1989) echoed these sentiments: "parent involvement programs should be designed to meet the needs of parents and students, rather than the needs of the program" (p. 26).

In summary, this review of the history of parent participation and involvement in education reveals a dichotomy in the perceptions of importance placed upon the role that parents should play in the elementary education of their children. This divergence in role perception is accompanied by a parallel divergence in the role and importance of teachers and state education. The effect of this shift in balance between parent

participation and teacher professionalism, combined with the assumption of structural and instructional divisions within education by curriculum specialists, has had considerable influence upon the development and form of early childhood education and upon the role of parents within education.

Parent involvement and participation in early childhood education has included roles for direct instruction in the home, as teacher's aides in the classroom and school, in clarifying curriculum and educational program organization and operation, and as an institutionalized political force.

Alberta's E.C.S.

The importance of carefully designed and implemented early childhood education programs and of the need for such programs to include the family environment within their designs, has been established in research. A diversity of early childhood education models and approaches has resulted from this research.

Alberta's Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) was conceived and developed during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The first statement of mandated program directions was issued in 1972. The program, its philosophy, its principles and its objectives can be traced to a number of early childhood education program models. The resulting E.C.S. model attempted to capitalize on the strengths of each of these models, bringing them together into a form unique in Alberta's educational system.

E.C.S. also includes an emphasis upon parent involvement and decision-making. Epstein (1986) affirmed the benefit of parent-involvement in early childhood programs, and raised several considerations for such early childhood parent involvement programs to be successful:

> ...if teachers want parents to think that they should help, then they must demonstrate this with an active program of parent involvement...If teachers want parents to feel confident that they can help, they (and the school administrators) must organize and conduct workshops for parents in <u>how to help</u>...they [parents] responded favorably to programs that stressed the cooperation of schools and families to

> help their children succeed. (Epstein, 1986, p. 291-292)

Models of Early Childhood Education

The 1960s saw significant shifts and developments within early childhood education in North America. Fowler proposed that young children exposed to "play-game activities" that were coordinated with their developing problem-solving capacity would gain improved cognition skills (Evans, 1975, p. 3). Acceptance of this thinking is reflected in a 1971 statement by the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development: "Preschooling is desirable for all children, but it is a necessity for the disadvantaged. Without it, there is little possibility of achieving equality in education" (Evans, 1975, p. 4).

The result was early education designed to compensate for "real or perceived lacks in total environment of many children" (Evans, p. 6). Whereas prekindergarten education had been largely the domain of affluent children, this concept of compensatory education lead to an expansion of

early childhood education in two directions. First, education programs were introduced at much younger ages, and second, existing early childhood education programs were modified from the "socialization-mental health function to cognition-stimulation approach" (Evans, p. 7).

The combined effect was to bring large numbers of economically and culturally disadvantaged children into early childhood education programs. The Head Start Program was an attempt to meet the educational needs of this new group of children.

The Head Start program

This "massive and complex social experiment was first begun in 1965" (Evans, 1975, p. 79). The program philosophy assumed that developmental stages of children were determined by genetic forces that must be nurtured without external pressures that could obstruct this natural growth. The program was aimed at large numbers of educationally disadvantaged children for whom it was held that "earlier intervention for total development would somehow reduce or eliminate the

educational disadvantage that children of poverty seemed to face continually at regular school entry and beyond" (Evans, p. 60).

Two major trends in the 1960's led to the establishment of the Head Start project. The first was increasing calls for reform of the American education system to address the high percentage of black youth from low-income families who were functional drop-outs before age sixteen. Education was viewed as the escape route from poverty and unfulfilling lifestyles. Fears of violent social unrest in the mid-1960's added impetus to the call for educational reform.

The second trend was the optimism in the field of developmental psychology about the importance of early childhood experiences. Hunt (1961) and Flavell (1963) made Piaget's work on the origins of intelligence accessible to North American educational psychologists. The optimistic view of early experience as determinant of future success that arose from Piaget's writings was compatable with the existing tradition of unlimited opportunities for anyone in

the United States. Head Start was to be the successful application of early childhood education resulting in positive social reform.

The Head Start program had seven objectives: (a) to improve the physical health of children; (b) to improve the emotional and social development of children; (c) to improve the mental process and skills of children, particularly in conceptual and verbal skills; (d) to instill patterns and expectations of success; (e) to strengthen family-child relationships; (f) to strengthen family-society relationships; and (g) to establish a sense of dignity and self-worth in the child and the family.

Head Start was initially focussed on precluding developmental delays for three- to five-year-olds by providing a centre-based program and trained staff. While particular programs achieved marked student improvement in academically relevant skills, for the majority of Head Start programs there were no discernible short- or long-term benefits. Even the most impressive programs, in which student skills in

first grade were brought up to or even slightly above national averages, did not appear to have long-term advantages. Follow-up studies indicated that by the end of the third grade, all of the preschool gains had disappeared.

Proponents of Head Start either blamed this apparent lack of program value upon inappropriate evaluation methodology or held that Head Start had redeeming features that had not been considered in the evaluation methods used (White, 1981). Evaluations of the success of Head Start "have more often been of global comparisons: Head Start (whatever happens) versus no Head Start" (Evans, 1975, p. 69). Findings were that (a) for most children, any Head Start program was better than none; (b) positive gains in academic-intelligence scores achieved in Head Start dissipated quickly without special services in regular school programs; (c) Head Start children had an advantage in adjusting to school organization and procedures; (d) basic skills development was usually not accelerated; and (e) Head Start children who maintained their cognitive advances

usually were attending schools with lower proportions of low-income children.

These results did not live up to the anticipated educational gains and did not reflect the optimistic projections made for early childhood education programs based upon Piagetian principles. Head Start advocates began to claim other, less academic, gains for the children in the program. Social and emotional benefits were held to be at least as important as intellectual impacts (White, 1981). Head Start advocates added the emerging evidence of the advantages of parent involvement, so that Evans observed in 1975 that "Head Start now seems aimed at reaching children through their parents, rather than at attempting to perform educational magic directly and exclusively upon children" (Evans, 1975, p. 70).

This new Head Start included parent involvement in a variety of roles. In addition, the program was involved in aspects of family life, including the monitoring of dental and health care, offering community resources,

instructing mothers about nutrition, and informing parents about career opportunities.

Prior to developing a program in a particular community, Head Start officials conducted surveys to determine plans for parent participation that would benefit the specific needs of parent, child and teacher within that community. Parent involvement could take a variety of forms, rotating out from a school base to reach the identified needs through toy and book lending libraries, recreation centres, after school and child care programs, parent education and support groups, community and family outreach and parenting programs (Berger, cited in Highett, 1988).

Throughout the program's operation, parents' needs and suggestions were continuously solicited and reviewed. As parents became more familiar and involved with the operation of the program, they moved into roles of decision-making and administration.

A 1972-3 review of the Alabama Head Start Project (Bauch, Vietze, & Morris, 1973) revealed

that parents were involved in all of the parent involvement roles identified by Gordon (Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, & True, 1977). However, the effectiveness of parent participation varied inversely with the size of the centre. In addition, some services available through the centre were not accessed by parents, probably because of ineffective communication networks, and a degree of uncertainty existed about how parents could become involved. The crucial questions affecting parent participation modes in Head Start concerned the purpose of involvement and the establishment of priorities for involvement, given that parents had a finite amount of time and energy (Bauch, Vietze, & Morris, 1973, p. 51).

An evaluation of the Head Start program in Tallahassee, Florida in 1966 (Willmon, cited in Watts, Pacey, & McBride, 1972, p. 48, Appendix C) revealed that student scores on the Detroit Group Intelligence Test were significantly higher for children whose parents were active or highly active in the program as compared to children whose parents had no involvement. There was "no

significant difference attributable to intelligence" (p. 48) between the involved and not involved groups, suggesting that parent participation influenced academic motivation.

The Homestart program

In 1968, a new initiative grew out of the Coleman report (General Accounting Office, 1979) and provided the basis for a new initiative in early childhood education. Focussing upon the impact of integration on elementary schools, the report "also claimed that the single largest factor in determining success at the elementary level was the kind of family experience a child had had" (White, 1981, p. 210).

The Homestart program was implemented to help families prepare their three- to five-year-old children for elementary school. After four years, the Homestart program was evaluated. Found to be as effective as Head Start but lacking political support, Homestart was cancelled.

Project Follow Through

The concept of Head Start continued to evolve until it encompassed three aspects of curricular thought. The first was active parent involvement, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the family's ability to respond to its children (Nimnicht, Johnson, & Johnson, 1973). The second was rejection of the prevailing attitude that seemed to equate cultural differences with cultural deficiencies" (Cole & Bruner, 1972), and the realization that different cultural backgrounds required adaptations in instruction and curricular expectations. The third was that of planned variation of curriculum.

Project Follow Through encompassed twenty-two curricular variations by 1970-1, each representing an attempt to address these three aspects. All of these programs demonstrated success with students, which gave rise to three beliefs about early childhood education. First, judicious, competent experimentation is good. Second, there is no one best way to teach children. Third, community

choice in the selection of alternate educational approaches can increase the probability of success (Evans, 1975).

All programs shared basic agreement on the need to start where the learner is, to individualize instruction, to blame failure on faulty techniques and materials rather than the child, to establish clear goals although precise objectives were not always necessary, to hold to a core of school-appropriate learnings that all children could master, and to believe that all children should feel good about school.

In summary, Head Start, Homestart, and Project Follow Through were experiments in early childhood education that failed to create the massive social reform anticipated during their development and implementation. Children benefitted from all of these programs, but the long-term benefit of intervention in academic, parenting and social deficits failed to meet expectations. These programs demonstrated that "preventive education has to begin considerably

earlier than the third birthday, since deficits are often clearly present by then and are so difficult to turn around" (White, 1981, p. 210). However, White continued, "there is some modest evidence that seems to suggest intervention programs focused on the first years of life, and working with the family rather than bypassing the parents, are likely to be a genuinely effective approach" (White, p. 211).

Alberta's E.C.S. model draws several emphases from these experiments in early intervention. E.C.S. was originally defined as providing service to children ages birth to eight. The objectives of the program emphasize the development of self-concept, and social and emotional skills. Specific academic development in reading and mathematics is not specified within objectives. Instead, children are to "develop concepts related to number, space and time" and to "develop language skills which include using sounds, words and grammatical structures, understanding and using language...increasing knowledge of words and their meaning" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 12).

This emphasis on child development rather than on academic preparation is recognition of the difficulty to demonstrate long-term academic gains for early childhood education programs.

Homestart and Follow Through demonstrated the value of parent education and involvement in early childhood intervention programs. Although not entirely an intervention program, Alberta's E.C.S. program mandates parent involvement and attributes to it significant benefits to children, their families and their educational program (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 14). However, what these benefits may be is not specified within program documents, which appears consistent with the difficulties experienced in identifying the gains attributable to Head Start programs. The implied growth in parenting skills as a vehicle for improving the child's educational future is also consistent with the outcomes of Head Start, Homestart, and Project Follow Through.

Piagetian models

For Piaget, language was structured by logic and he "rejects the proposition that language is a sufficient condition for the development of thinking operations" (Evans, 1975, p. 203). Instead, Piaget held that development followed a fixed, defined order of stages: sensory motor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. A child's rate of development might vary from that of his or her peers, but the sequence of that development was invariant.

Further, components of intelligent behaviour at one stage are incorporated into those of the later stages, so that a child's intellectual development is heirarchical. Thus, each stage is qualitatively distinct from both the preceding and the following stages. Age-based stages of a child's development could also be developed by studying large numbers of children and noting the age range present during each stage. Such age equivalents are always approximations, and can not be applied restrictively. Similar age-based

trends in moral judgment and play have also been identified (Piaget, 1951).

Application of Piagetian theory and the age-stage correlation identifies three stages of development that are applicable to early childhood education. During the sensory-motor stage, the child senses and manipulates objects and develops concepts of object-permanence, object-variance, and begins to note cause-effect relationships of personal actions. This stage commences at birth and includes the first two years or so of life.

The preoperational stage sees accelerated language development. The child still has limitations to his or her reasoning abilities, especially in conserving properties of objects, attending to multiple properties of objects, and in establishing specific cause-effect relationships that are then applied inappropriately to other unique cases. The child also attributes human characteristics to inanimate objects, views the world as a human creation, and does not distinguish between reality and fantasy. The preoperational stage lasts about five years

and is followed by the concrete operations stage that starts around age six or seven in which the child develops logical reasoning skills.

The approximation of seven years for a child to move from the sensory-motor stage through the preoperational stage into the concrete operations stage is applicable to most children. However, some children will progress more rapidly and others more slowly. The constant in Piagetian theory is that the child will progress through each stage in order, resulting in an evolution of abilities.

Sullivan (1967) held that this necessary evolution could easily lead to the view that educational intervention is of minor value. Piaget "has not systematically addressed the possible pedagogical applications of his theory" (Evans, 1975, p. 219). Piaget's guidance to early childhood education was limited to three recommendations: "provide children with actual objects to manipulate, assist children in their development of question-asking skills, and know

why particular operations are difficult for children" (Evans, p. 219).

Thus, within Piagetian theory, the goal of early childhood education is not to teach, but to provide experiences prerequisite for learning to occur:

> The goal in education is not to increase the amount of knowledge, but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover. When we teach too fast, we keep the child from inventing and discovering himself--Teaching means creating situations where structures can be discovered; it does not mean transmitting structures which may be assimilated at nothing other than a verbal level. (Piaget, as quoted in Ripple & Rockcastle, 1964, p. 221)

Piagetian theory is reflected in the principles of Alberta's E.C.S. program. The fourth principle affirms that "young children think in very concrete terms, noticing the immediately observable characteristics of objects and people, such as shape and color...they are still laying a foundation for abstract and logical thinking" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 3). Further, children in E.C.S. require experiences that lead to logical thinking, reading, writing

and mathematical skills, to creative thinking and to development of non-verbal ways of understanding and expressing ideas.

The program dimensions established for E.C.S. specify developmental objectives rather than behavioural objectives. Children are to develop and grow in self-concept, in health and physical development, in social and emotional development, and in intellectual and creative development. Within none of these areas do objectives specify particular objectives for mastery. The underlying emphases are upon continuous development of skills and upon diversity of existing levels of development. Pedagogical specificity for supporting this development is not provided by any of the E.C.S. regulatory or policy guidelines.

Piagetian theory provides opportunities for parent involvement, as specified within E.C.S. This provision arises from the Piagetian view of genetic rather than environmental control of child development.

Montessori preschool education

Originally designed for underprivileged children, Montessori programs in North America are the province of highly privileged children, given that Montessori schools remain outside of the mainstream of public education and rely upon parent fees.

The Montessori approach relies upon a carefully prepared environment, a critical emphasis upon teacher role, and has no place for fantasy. The program encompasses three components: motor education in which the child learns to complete practical life exercises, sensory education in which elaborate didactic materials promote sensory discrimination skills and concepts, and language education.

To be successful, the Montessori teacher "must relinquish a pontifical or pedantic role and serve more as a resource person, a catalyst for progress" (Evans, 1975, p. 265). The teacher is to observe the child carefully so as to know when the child is ready to encounter an advanced

exercise. Once the child is captivated by his or her own inquiry, the teacher must behave as if the child no longer exists (Montessori, 1967). Montessorian programs place lesser emphasis upon group activities, pay less attention to fantasy play, and hold a stronger orientation to pre-academic and early academic skill development (Evans, 1975).

Fleege's study of Montessori children (cited in Watts, Pacey, & McBride, 1972, p. 42-3, Appendix C) showed Montessori children to have greater gain in intellectual growth than other preschool children. In addition, they showed greater growth in acquisition of initiative, self-confidence, self-control, persistence, independence, acuity in sensory perception, and positive attitudes toward learning. The groups were equal in development of creativity. Montessori children also showed higher maturity and a greater readiness level.

Parents do not have active roles within behaviour modification or Montessori programs, except in supportive roles related to provision of

funds, because of the structured role for those who work with the children and maintain the carefully prepared environment.

Aspects of Alberta's E.C.S. program reflect some Montessorian concepts. The fifth principle upholds play as "a major learning process and, with its risk-free atmosphere, provides a natural opportunity for young children to add to their knowledge, learn new skills, and to practise familiar ones...it provides may situations in which the child observes, discovers, reasons and solves problems" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 3). However, this play is not to be approached haphazardly: "parents, early childhood staff and communities must provide the materials, time and space so that play is an integral part of every child's day...they can carefully plan and provide opportunities that capitalize on the natural tendency to play" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 3).

The critical role of trained staff envisioned by Montessori is also encompassed within E.C.S.

The 1976 E.C.S. Task Force on Teacher Competence reported that "the manner in which the teacher relates to each child and to the parents of each child is the single most important ingredient in any early childhood program", a statement considered so significant that it is included within Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 14), which is the mandated program of studies document for E.C.S.

E.C.S. differs from the Montessori model in that it does not specify the facility and the materials within which and with which children are to play. It also does not specify the type of training the teacher shall have and the types of behaviours the teacher shall display within the classroom at particular stages of children's play. Thirdly, E.C.S. specifies roles for parents as teachers of their own children.

British infant schools

In a philosophy that promotes the child's self-actualization, the open education movement holds that learning and education "arise from an

array of classroom alternatives and are the collective outcome of transactions between a teacher and children working together as joint decision makers" (Evans, 1975, p. 292).

The British Infant School model, reviewed by the Plowden Report, featured the integrated day in which flexible and indeterminant periods of time were provided for children to explore learning centres that enabled each child to synthesize his or her own learnings. The teacher was thus provided with time for individualized attention to each child in this learning process.

Vertical or family age groupings of children spanning two or three years were involved in a program that placed greater emphasis upon inductive thinking and the development of creative problem-solving strategies than upon levels of absolute academic achievement. The children were "trusted to do their own learning" (Evans, pp. 298-299) within activities described as Play:

> In play, children gradually develop concepts of causal relationships, the power to discriminate, to make judgments, to analyze and synthesize, to imagine and to formulate. Children

> become absorbed in their play and the satisfaction of bringing it to a satisfactory conclusion fixes habits of concentration which can be transferred to other learning. (Plowden, 1967, p. 193)

The open-space classroom, the need for team-teaching and individualized contacts with each child within the concept of unstructured play, opened a role for parent involvement in the classroom, although "school headmasters are invested with a striking amount of authority" (Evans, p. 299) so that parents as decision-makers was not a role within the British Infant School model in the early 1970's.

The greatest influence of the British infant schools upon E.C.S. can be seen in the integrated day, a concept that is not included in regulations but that does guide most E.C.S. teachers in planning their programs. Large blocks of time, ideally equalling half the child's day in the centre, are provided for play. The principle of play espoused by E.C.S. is very similar to that implemented within the British infant schools.

E.C.S. also endorses the emphasis upon development of self-concept. The third principle

of the program holds that "the way each child is treated by significant people--family, peers and teachers--greatly influences the development of the child's self-concept". Further, "through understanding of how others see them, children learn to value themselves and decide whether they are worthwhile and competent" (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 2).

The role of staff in E.C.S. is also similar to that in the British model. Teachers are to be facilitators rather than leaders:

> Teacher 'competence' is a synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes and includes the ability to...facilitate the child's mastery and satisfaction in relating with other children, adults,and physical environments [by] (a) encouraging children to actively explore their surroundings, (b) displaying empathy for children's feelings, (c) discussing with children their progress and achievements, and (d) responding to each instance of undesirable behavior rather than applying rigid rules to fit all situations. (Alberta Education, 1984b, pp. 14-15)

In summary, the expansion of early childhood education programs to include greater numbers of children from diverse cultural and social backgrounds gave rise to a variety of curricula

and methodology during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Each of these programs had impact upon the development of Alberta's E.C.S.

Piagetian models held that development was genetic, and that education could do little but provide stimulation to the emerging stages of development. E.C.S. developed a framework of developmental objectives that recognized the diversity of children and the on-going evolution of their cognitive skills.

Montessori programs provided such stimulation through carefully orchestrated activities to maximize the child's development. E.C.S. recognized the importance of Montessori's work by endorsing the need for children to observe, manipulate, and explore objects in their environment under the guidance of a specialist teacher. However, the structured pedagogy of the Montessori program was not included in E.C.S.

Open education models fostered the child's natural curiosity, placing priority upon the child's current learning experience rather than long-term goals. Alberta's E.C.S. program

endorsed concepts of play and mandated a priority upon development of the child's self-concept.

Perhaps the greatest influence on E.C.S. came from the Head Start, Homestart and Project Follow Through programs. Their emphasis upon parent involvement, and the apparent advantages arising to children when parents were active in the program gave rise to mandated roles for parents as decision-makers, volunteer assistants, and teachers. In addition, E.C.S. recognized the advantages arising from parent education programs offered in conjunction with and supportive to the children's program.

Development of Alberta's E.C.S.

In the early 1971, Alberta Education initiated an evaluation of a pilot project in early childhood education begun during the previous year. As part of that study, Watts, Pacey, and McBride (1972) also reviewed studies of 22 early childhood programs operating in North America in the early 1970s.

It appears from the first recommendation contained in the report that the curricular experimentation endorsed by Project Follow Through had been initiated in Alberta but with limitations to the time committed to such experimentation:

> If the government is serious about its experimental efforts in the development of education programs, it must be prepared to allow the time for project planning and the appropriate research management. (Watts, Pacey & McBride, 1972, p. 142)

Two further recommendations focussed upon the government's inability and lack of expertise to initiate the leadership, coordination and communication strategies necessary to develop early childhood education programs.

However, specific program recommendations were forthcoming, based primarily upon the perceived success of the Inglewood Project in Calgary. Although the nature and success of this program was not unanimously supported, it was suggested as a program "very appropriate for some children" (p. 147). Support for the Inglewood Project was based upon the involvement of the community in the process of developing objectives

and implementation strategies. The direction initiated in the Inglewood Project had the preschool program playing "a strategic part in a movement toward total community involvement as part of the community redevelopment project" (pp. 147-148).

The uniqueness of this symbiotic relationship and the potential of this approach to program design and development was given priority because the other project being evaluated "was not different from the kindergarten programs previously operating" (p. 147). Further, the authors held that this second program "did not represent an exploration of a new model or models for early childhood education" (p. 147).

The final recommendation of the authors challenged the government and Alberta Education to provide committed leadership to early education in the province:

> The results of this evaluation lead us to conclude that the staff working in the centres did not have adequate planning and management support for their endeavours. This project might have moved closer to its anticipated outcomes had there been a serious

> concern for the welfare of the total project by those responsible. (Watts, Pacey, & McBride, 1972, p. 149)

In 1972, Walter Worth completed his commission's report A Choice of Futures (Worth, 1972) which presented an outline for educational planning intended to guide the province through the decade. Worth advocated one year of universal opportunity for children to prepare for regular education. This selective compensatory program was accompanied by a recommendation that provincial day care programs be extended to include early childhood education roles beyond existing health or welfare programs.

These ealy education programs were to be delivered through a variety of agencies including school systems, day cares, nurseries and private kindergartens. Worth held that this richness of diversity would create a choice of learning environments for children. To enable all children to be included in such programs, Worth envisioned the use of television to reach homes and educational centres throughout Alberta.

Also in 1972, Downey prepared his report Opportunities for Infants: Toward a Policy on Early Childhood Development (Downey, 1972) which had been requested by the Government of Alberta as a response to Watts, Pacey and McBride. Downey outlined four types of early childhood programs that were available for implementation. Two of these were compensatory in nature, reflecting Head Start objectives for handicapped and environmentally deprived children. The third was to be "preventive in nature and selective in application" to ensure that "all children get a fair and equal start in the process of development" (Downey, 1972, p. 20). The final type offered general enrichment for all children.

Downey also called for a comprehensive government position to address all of these program types: "The State (government) is the only agency with the powers and resources required to coordinate opportunities, to fill gaps, and to provide special support where support is needed. (Downey, p. 25).

The response of the government was the publication of Operational Plans for Early Childhood Services (Government of Alberta) in 1973. The introduction identifies that document as an operational policy statement on the implementation of "a phased-in publicly supported program of Early Childhood Services" (Government of Alberta, 1973, p. 1).

The main purpose of E.C.S. was stated then, and remains, "to strengthen the sense of dignity and self-worth within the young child and his family" (p. 3). Further, "we must concern ourselves with the relatedness of all learning endeavours and services that will nurture both the young child and the family" (p. 4). The similarity of this philosophy with that of Head Start and of Project Follow Through is evident.

Provincial standards for E.C.S. programs were subsequently established, "but within this framework much local discretion and initiative may be exercised" (p. 46). This local discretion was supported by expectations to "attempt to maximize the involvement of parents and local communities"

(p. 46) through "the involvement and cooperation of parents and community agencies in the decision-making process which affects vital areas of their own and their children's lives" (p. 18).

This decision-making role was to be completed "with the assistance of consultative services from local departments of government and local professional groups" (p. 19). The government's advisory role was made necessary by a further policy statement that "the attendance of any child at an approved Early Childhood Services program is optional" (p. 21) prior to mandatory school age because "the principle of parental prerogative at this stage of the child's life should be upheld" (p. 21).

A school board or a licensed private operator could start E.C.S. programs for handicapped children, disadvantaged children or for "kindergarten" children (pp. 24-25). Government support for the compensatory philosophy of Head Start is reflected by 1973 funding levels for E.C.S. programs that provided up to $695 per handicapped child, $365 for each disadvantaged

child, and $280 for "all other children" (p. 47) which are assumed to be the group earlier defined as "kindergarten".

The instructional program to be implemented in E.C.S. was not specified. Instead, "a number of approaches to developing and delivering E.C.S. programs in Alberta should be explored in order that both urban and rural children may receive this service" (p. 44). This position was defended in that "no one basic approach, in itself, is likely to be adequate in meeting the specific needs of children and their parents in rural and urban Alberta" (p. 30). However, specific guidelines that would be at once comprehensive and specific "will be prepared for use by local teachers, project coordinators, instructional assistants, advisory committees and others" (p. 31).

Alberta Education reviewed the success of these E.C.S. programs in 1978 (Alberta Education, 1978). Recommendations included clarification of the program and its rationale, and of roles and responsibilities for all involved. In addition,

the report identified a need to develop guidelines for E.C.S. staff, and to evaluate the program's impact on children and parents.

The establishment of E.C.S. programs was primarily undertaken by private operators, prompting development of administrative handbooks (Alberta Education, 1981, 1983b) to guide parents and community members through the policy and regulatory expectations for E.C.S. program operation. Involvement by school boards trailed that by private operators until late in the 1980s.

By 1982, E.C.S. had clarified program philosophy and program goals within eight program dimensions: health and physical development, social development, emotional development, self-concept development, intellectual development, creative development, parent involvement, and staff development and community services (Alberta Education, 1982). Beliefs underlying these goals were also clearly stated by 1982, including endorsement of the British Infant School principle that "play is central to children's learning" (p. 1) and of the primacy of

child development as key determiner of program content and implementation.

This concept of an optional program dedicated to active parent and community involvement, with goals consistent with child development theory, and no prescriptive curriculum has been retained. The primacy of play as the mandated instructional strategy leaves E.C.S. staff with the task of working with parents and community members to conduct student needs analyses, resource identification, and program design.

The teacher is viewed as being part of this educational community and thereby as possessing needs for professional development and support similar to the needs of parents and community members. The primacy of the teacher in assuring the full implementation and success of the E.C.S. program is not underplayed within this structure:

> The importance of staff competencies in the provision of appropriate learning experiences for young children cannot be over-emphasized...<u>the manner in which the teacher relates to each child is the single most important ingredient in any early childhood program</u>. (Alberta Education, 1984b, p. 14)

The role of parents in E.C.S. is specified to include all aspects of involvement: parenting education, teachers of their own children, classroom support, decision-making, and generalized child advocacy roles (Alberta Education, 1984b).

Following a second review of E.C.S. completed in 1984 (Alberta Education, 1984a), the Alberta government endorsed the concept of program continuity which was defined in terms consistent with key concepts of Early Childhood Services for extension into regular education. This concept endorsed the primacy of child development principles in determining curricular content and implementation strategies and called for the involvement of "a team of instructional staff, program administrators, parents and community resource persons" to initiate "ongoing cooperative development, implementation and evaluation of Early Childhood Services (ECS) through Grade six education programs" (Alberta Education, 1988b, p. 5).

In summary, Alberta's E.C.S. program adopted its philosophy, goals, program dimensions, and implementation concepts from a number of successful early childhood education models. The perceived success of such programs and the evolution of E.C.S. programs within public education appears to be supporting extension of these concepts within the elementary school.

The challenge facing Alberta's schools as they address the call for program continuity is very much the same as that identified in 1972:

> The schools must find the meaningful ways and appropriate times so that parents can begin to make contact with the school. The thrust must come from the schools, and they should expect to make a number of attempts before successful approaches are found for their particular community. (Watts, Pacey & McBride, 1972, p. 132.)

Summary

This chapter reviewed research and literature on three aspects of this study. The first review was of the role of educational constituencies and of the importance of congruency of constituency attitudes if educational change is to occur. The

second review was of the historical development of parent involvement and participation in elementary education. The third review was of the development of Alberta's E.C.S.

The study considers how constituency attitudes toward parent involvement in elementary education have been affected by experiences with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. It also considers how the congruency or divergence present in those attitudes might impact upon changes to the roles of parents in schools mandated by the School Act of 1988.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Background

Alberta is experiencing a shift in demographics that is affecting Alberta politics and that may be implicated in recent changes to the School Act governing opportunities for parent involvement in education. The population of rural Alberta is declining rapidly while urban centres, particularly Edmonton and Calgary, continue to grow. The rate of this population shift is affecting the political face of Alberta and provoking a call for representation reform. Although 53% of the population lives in Edmonton and Calgary, those cities share just 42% of the representatives in the legislature. The 1989 election underlined the growing divergence between a rural population that supported the government and an urban shift toward opposition parties.

Alberta's economy is based upon agriculture, petroleum, and forestry, with growing efforts to encourage expansion of the manufacturing sector.

The provincial government is supporting the development of new industries with tax incentives and low interest loans. Recent government initiatives have focused upon development of bleached kraft pulp mills in the boreal forest.

Alberta's education system provides equal status, recognition, and funding to both public and separate (Catholic) jurisdictions. In addition, the School Act recognizes private schools and home-schooling as legitimate educational options. A recent supreme court decision has supported the creation of francophone school boards, although the first of these has yet to be established.

Within this educational structure, E.C.S. programs are mandated by the School Act as equal in status to regular education programs, within specific limits. The first of these is that enrolment of children in E.C.S.programs is not mandatory. The second is that E.C.S.programs may be offered by school jurisdictions, private schools or private societies, each of which is

recognized by the Act and is thereby eligible for government funding.

The majority of children enrolled in E.C.S. programs attend school jurisdiction programs. This is a reversal of the conditions accompanying the original formation of E.C.S. programs in the province when most programs were offered by private societies. A significant number of private societies continue to offer E.C.S. programs throughout the province. Government regulations do not distinguish between public (school jurisdiction) and private (society) E.C.S. programs. Funding levels, regulatory conditions and monitoring expectations are consistent for both.

A significant difference exists within the possible roles for parents and the immediacy of their involvement. Within private societies, parents form the membership and the executive, thereby gaining full control over all aspects of program design, implementation, evaluation, and operation. Within public E.C.S. programs, government regulations require parent involvement

in program planning, implementation and evaluation, but this involvement is often subject to or ordered by school jurisdiction policies and procedures. In addition, particular operational functions such as staff selection and evaluation are often closed to parent participation because of union contracts and legal statutes binding the jurisdiction to its employees.

The Study Area

Located in northwestern Alberta, some 500 kilometres from Edmonton, the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 includes the most productive farming region in the Peace. Within its boundaries, the Elmworth field is one of the most productive petroleum reservoirs in the province. Bordering the County are vast tracts of boreal hardwood forest that support lumber and pulp mills.

The largest centre in the County is the city of Grande Prairie, with a population of nearly 30,000. The surrounding area includes towns, villages and hamlets with a total population of 12,000.

Within the County, education is provided by three public jurisdictions, two private schools and a number of parents engaged in home schooling. Two of these jurisdictions, the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 and Grande Prairie School District No. 2357, are public school systems while the third is the Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28. Grande Prairie School District No. 2357 operates totally within the limits of the city of Grande Prairie. The Catholic and county jurisdictions serve the surrounding area. The Catholic system also serves city students.

All three of these jurisdictions offer E.C.S. programs, although the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 is in its first year of doing so, having just recently absorbed the operation of the West Central Preschool Society which had provided E.C.S. programs throughout the County for fifteen years. This region reflects the socio-economic realities of the province and was selected as a representative study site.

Four schools were selected for the study, two each from the County of Grande Prairie and the Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District. These jurisdictions were selected because their attendance areas overlap, and therefore their parent groups share similar socio-economic conditions.

The schools selected include two larger schools located in the City of Grande Prairie. St. Patrick's Community School serves 360 Catholic students in E.C.S. to Grade 6 drawn from the city and from the surrounding farms, subdivisions, acreages and trailer courts. Harry Balfour School is a County school serving the same rural area surrounding the city. It offers E.C.S. to Grade 9 to about 650 students.

Two small rural schools were also selected. St. Mary's is a Catholic elementary school serving about 90 students in E.C.S. to Grade 9. It is located in the Town of Beaverlodge, some 40 kilometres west of Grande Prairie. The second County school is located in the Village of Hythe,

55 kilometres northwest of Grande Prairie. It serves 230 students in E.C.S. to Grade 6.

Because the County has just recently initiated E.C.S. programs in its schools, parents of children enrolled in grades 1-6 who attended E.C.S. would have had experience with private E.C.S. operations. The Catholic system has offered E.C.S. programs for many years, so parents of its students have had experience with public E.C.S. operation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the degree of support for the call for increased parent involvement in education in Alberta as mandated within the new School Act. Further, this study considers the possible impact of Alberta's seventeen year experiment with parent involvement within the Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) model upon this call for expansion of parent involvement. If E.C.S. has had a positive impact upon parents, then it is likely that those parents would prefer parent involvement roles similar to

those they filled in E.C.S. That not all children now attending school were enrolled in E.C.S. may mean that parents differ in their views towards the desirability of parent involvement and towards the type of parent involvement they prefer for regular education.

That E.C.S. has operated under a philosophy and operational regulations significantly different from regular education may mean that teachers and administrators differ in their attitudes toward parent involvement, dependent upon their experience with E.C.S. program operation. It is also possible that teachers and administrators differ in their attitudes toward parent involvement depending on whether or not the school system has had experience with public E.C.S. operation.

The research questions are four. First, what kind of parent involvement, if any, is being supported by each of the educational constituencies? The groups to be included as educational constituencies are (a) parents both with and without experience with parent

involvement in E.C.S., (b) teachers, (c) principals, and (d) superintendents and school system administrators. Second, is there congruency and consistency within this support as to the type of parent involvement preferred, and, if so, does it represent congruence or divergence from the type of parent involvement specified within E.C.S.? Third, is there congruency and consistency among different educational constituencies in these views? Fourth, is there congruency and consistency of view within each constituency?

Instrumentation

Three questionnaires (Appendices A, B, and C) were designed and developed by the researcher to gather data from parents, teachers and administrators within the study area. The use of a mail survey questionnaire was made necessary by the geographical limitations and by the number of people to be surveyed. Dillman (1978) has documented the limitations applicable to such surveys. However, the Total Design Method he

presents offers strategies to reduce these limitations to acceptable limits.

All respondents remained anonymous and their personal responses confidential. Questionnaires were color coded to identify the educational constituency and internally coded to identify the jurisdiction and school within which the respondent resides to facilitate data analysis. The same questions, with slight wording changes necessary to make the questions more appropriate to specific constituencies, were used for all three questionnaires.

A Pilot Questionnaire was administered to a select number of parents (N = 19) and teachers (N = 5) in a school jurisdiction geographically adjacent to the study area. Results of the pilot survey were used to formulate the final content and wording of the questionnaires.

Design

For the study, selection of respondents was distributed among the selected boards on the same percentage ratio basis as their respective

enrolments. Surveys were sent to parents in Grades 1-6 in a stratified random sample. Parent respondents were selected at random from school registers. Total N for parents was 330. All principals and vice-principals (N = 6) and teachers (N = 50) in the grades and schools represented by the parents received questionnaires. All central office educational administrators (N = 5) also received administration questionnaires.

Parents were given the choice of returning completed questionnaires to the school for collection by the researcher, or to mail them directly to the researcher. Addressed, sealable envelopes were provided for each parent to ensure confidentiality at the school. Questionnaires from teachers, school administrators and central office administrators were mailed to the researcher.

Summation of data was by descriptive analysis of the results, with degree of congruency or divergence expressed as percentage of all respondents within the same constituency.

Comparison of constituency variance with other constituencies was made by descriptive analysis and comparative percentages.

Data Analysis

All questionnaires were analyzed first on a school by school basis. Comparisons were made between Catholic and County schools, between urban and rural student populations, between large schools and small schools. Catholic and County school returns were compared to identify differences in parent attitudes between public (Catholic) E.C.S. operation and private E.C.S. operation (County schools).

Parent questionnaires were further analyzed to identify potential influences of experience with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. Parents who had held E.C.S. executive positions were compared with other parents on attitudes towards influencing decision-making processes within the school. Parent involvement roles experienced in E.C.S. were compared to desired roles within regular education. Parent

perceptions of attitudes held by the school were compared to parent perceptions of the attitudes demonstrated by the E.C.S. staff. Finally, the number of years since the parent had experience with E.C.S. was correlated with each of these analyses.

A final comparative analysis was made on seven questionnaire items between parents, teachers, in-school administrators and central office administrators to establish degree of congruency on these issues. These items are numbers 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 on the administrator and teacher questionnaires. Because of variation in questionnaire construction, corresponding items on the parent questionnaire are 5, 14, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12, respectively.

Responses were reported as percentages of total constituency respondents. Because central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers were not selected randomly, measures of significance were not calculated.

Limitations

Within any research methodology, the concern arises about the feasibility of including sufficient numbers of parents, teachers, school-based administrators and system administrators to make it possible to draw meaningful conclusions about congruence within the educational constituency in the call for increased parent involvement. This concern becomes particularly relevant in the attempt to identify a sufficient number of parents who have not had experience with E.C.S., given that the majority of children now in school have been enrolled in E.C.S.

The issue of congruence within the parent constituency raises the need for demographic information about parents, such as their experience or lack of experience with E.C.S., how long it has been since their child attended an E.C.S. program, the type of E.C.S. operator, the parent's role within E.C.S., their rural or urban status. Issues of family income, of family status

and type, or other social indicators were not considered appropriate to this particular study which may have excluded useful correlations. The accuracy of information provided through self-reporting instruments may limit the validity of conclusions drawn from such reports.

The possibility for divergence within parents, teachers and school and system administrators as educational constituencies arising because of their experience with private versus public E.C.S. operators required selection of an area of study in which both possibilities have existed for sufficient time for parents from each system to now have their children within all levels of the public school system.

In a highly mobile society like that in Alberta, and given the non-mandatory nature of E.C.S. which permits parents to enrol their children in any E.C.S. program, regardless of personal religious preference, may make jurisdictional conparisons suspect. For example, in Beaverlodge, it is known that some Catholic parents traditionally enrolled their children in

the private E.C.S. program because of preference for the half-day programs offered there. These children returned to the Catholic system for grade one.

Because Alberta Education is limiting its proposals for both articulation and continuity to grades 1 to 6, this study narrowed its focus to parents, teachers and administrators of children now enrolled within those grades. This decision may have limited the validity of the study's findings by removing from the study parents of children now enrolled in junior and senior high school and whose experience with E.C.S. is more distant. This group may have a distinct view of the parent involvement issue, given the change in parent involvement evident in upper grades, as identified by research (Epstein, 1986).

Omitting this parent group from this study has made it impossible to consider decreasing calls for parent involvement as students move through secondary school. These parents may withdraw from active participation because opportunities for parent involvement are limited.

In turn, this might give rise to a higher degree of support for the provincial call for increased parent involvement. Omitting junior and senior high school teachers from the study means this possibility can not be considered.

The decision to exclude parents and teachers of older students is also defended in that parents' actual experience with the E.C.S. parent involvement model is separated by a fairly long period of time from the date of this study. During this time, E.C.S. has continued to evolve, modifying its own practices and its relationship to public education. This change may make the comments by parents of older children less relevant to present practice and conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The study involved parents, teachers and administrators from four schools in two school jurisdictions. A total of 387 questionnaires were distributed to 12 administrators (6 central office and 6 school-based), 50 teachers and 325 parents. This distribution included all central office administrators, all school administrators in the four study schools, and all teachers assigned to those schools. The parent sample was a random stratified sample that included the parents of one third of the students in each grade from grade one to grade six inclusive.

Rates of Return

A total of 184 questionnaires were completed and returned, for a return rate of 47%. Rates of return varied within the constituencies. All school-based administrators returned questionnaires. Two central office administrators did not return questionnaires. The resulting rate

of return for administrators was 83%. The rate of return for teachers was 66% while that of parents was 43%.

Total rates of return were very similar for the two school jurisdictions. The rate of return in the Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28 was 46%. The rate of return for the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 was 48%.

Rates of return varied between the four study schools from 37% at Hythe Elementary School to 54% at Harry Balfour School, both of which are operated by the County of Grande Prairie No. 1. The two Catholic schools, St. Mary's and St. Patrick Community School, had rates of return of 45% and 46% respectively.

The greatest variety in rates of return was among parents. Rates of return were lowest in Hythe Elementary (29%) and highest in Harry Balfour (54%). The rate of return for St. Mary's was 35% and at St. Patrick Community School it was 42%. These rates of return were deemed acceptable for this study after analysis of respondents

revealed representation from all groups within each constituency at each location.

The Respondents

The administrative group included two school superintendents, one deputy/assistant superintendent, six principals/vice-principals, and one other (Director of Special Education Services). Administrators with the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 included one superintendent, one deputy/assistant superintendent, three principals/vice-principals, and one other. Administrators with Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28 included three principals/vice-principals and one superintendent. Examination of jurisdiction staff directories revealed that responses were not received from two deputy/assistant superintendents, one from each jurisdiction.

Thirty-three teachers responded, of whom 20 were employed by the County and 13 by the Catholic system. Rates of return were very similar at 67% for the County teachers who received

questionnaires and 65% for the Catholic teachers. Ten teachers were assigned to primary classrooms (grades one to three). Ten teachers were assigned to upper elementary classrooms (grades four to six). Four teachers were assigned to split or multiple grades. One special education teacher and one E.C.S. teacher also responded. Seven teachers did not identify their teaching assignment.

Of all parents returning questionnaires, 93.6% had enrolled their children in E.C.S., 5.7% had not, with 0.7% not responding to that question. Asked to identify their E.C.S. program as being either a public or private operation, 41.8% reported public, 45.4% reported private, and 12.8% did not respond. Of all parents returning questionnaires, 27.6% reported that they had held executive positions while their child was enrolled in E.C.S., 58.9% had not, and 13.5% did not respond.

Parents were asked to indicate the grade in which their child was now enrolled. Many parents reported more than one child still enrolled in

school. Considering the youngest child only, 6.4% were enrolled in E.C.S., 58.2% were enrolled in primary grades, 33.3% were enrolled in upper elementary grades, 1.4% were in special placements. One parent did not answer the question.

Parents were asked to identify the term that best describes where they live. Of all parents responding, 24.8% lived on farms, 9.2% lived in trailer courts, 41.1% lived in towns, 24.1% lived on acreages, and 0.7% lived on an Indian reserve.

Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement

The first comparative analysis of the data considered whether constituencies sharing the same geographic location held similar attitudes toward parent involvement in school. The questionnaires asked school administrators and teachers "What kinds of activities should parents be involved with in elementary schools?" (Question 6 in Appendices A and B). Responses were compared with parent responses to the question "If your child's school asked for your involvement as a parent,

what kinds of activities would you like to be involved with?" (Question 9 in Appendix C).

School by School Comparison

Results were compared first on a school by school basis. Two comparisons were made. The first established the average response given by all members of the same constituency and then compared responses within each school to that average score. The second comparison identified the activities most favored and least favored by each constituency within each school. Results are shown in Table 1.

Comparison of individual school results with total constituency averages revealed substantial differences between schools. In Harry Balfour and Hythe schools, both of which are operated by the County of Grande Prairie No. 1, differences in attitudes toward parent involvement were evident. In Harry Balfour, administrators and teachers were more positive towards parent involvement than the average scores for all administrators and all teachers. Parents, however, were less positive

Table 1

Constituency Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement Compared by School

School Administrators

Involvement role	Average	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Individual students	55	100	0	100	0
Classroom volunteer	-	-	-	-	-
Office or Library	64	100	0	50	100
Field trips/learning activities	82	100	100	100	100
School Meeting	55	50	0	0	100
Supervision of students	82	100	100	100	100
Parent support	27	0	0	50	100
School Board meeting	55	100	0	50	0
Fund raising	82	100	100	100	100
Materials preparation	82	100	100	100	100

Teachers

Involvement role	Average	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Individual students	82	73	78	100	75
Classroom volunteer	85	82	78	89	100
Office or Library	80	91	44	89	100
Field trips/learning activities	82	82	67	78	50
School meeting	70	73	67	78	50
Supervision of students	100	100	100	100	100
Parent support	30	36	11	44	25
School board meeting	91	91	89	89	100
Fund raising	91	100	78	89	100
Materials preparation	70	73	44	89	75

Parents

Involvement role	Average	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Individual students	37	25	45	56	14
Classroom volunteer	70	73	65	69	71
Office or library	39	41	20	47	29
Field trips/learning activities	53	41	55	69	71
School meeting	53	51	65	51	43
Supervision of students	-	-	-	-	-
Parent support	16	10	20	22	29
School board meeting	34	23	45	44	43
Fund raising	48	33	65	56	86
Materials preparation	41	38	20	55	57

Note. All numbers are percentages of total respondents.

than the average. In Hythe, administrator and teacher scores were less positive than average while parent results were more positive towards parent involvement. In both Catholic schools, St Patrick and St. Mary's, all constituency scores were more positive towards parent involvement.

Comparison of preferred parent involvement activities identified school differences and consistencies. In all schools, the least support was given by all constituencies to helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children. This congruency in the least preferred activity is not accompanied by similar agreement on most preferred activities. While most support was shown for helping with fund-raising for school equipment and library books, significant divergence of opinion was evident.

In Harry Balfour, administrators and teachers agreed on fund-raising and supervising children at special school outings and events as the most preferred parent involvement activities. Parents preferred to help in their child's classroom and

to attend meetings about problems the school is facing with student behaviours. Meetings about student behaviours was ranked as a least preferred activity by administrators and teachers.

In Hythe, all constituencies ranked helping other parents with their children as the least preferred activity. However, there was no consistent agreement on the most preferred activity.

In St. Patrick school, the most preferred activity was helping individual children who are having difficulty, selected by all constituencies. Similar congruency existed for least preferring helping other parents with their children.

In St. Mary's, there is congruency for most preferring helping individual students, helping plan and arrange field trips and learning activities, and fund-raising. Congruency also exists for helping other parents with their children, which was rated as the least preferred activity.

Conclusion

In spite of variations between schools, constituency attitudes in Catholic schools are congruent in being positive towards parent involvement, and in selecting most and least preferred activities for parent involvement. Such congruency does not exist in County schools.

Jurisdiction Comparisons

This apparent difference between Catholic schools and County schools was further considered by completing a jurisdictional analysis of attitudes toward parent involvement. For this comparison, attitudes for all constituencies within each jurisdiction were compared to the constituency average (see Table 2).

Within the Catholic system, school administrators, teachers and parents were all more positive than the constituency averages in their attitudes toward parent involvement, while central office administrators were more negative. In the County system, all constituencies were negative toward parent involvement.

Table 2

Constituency Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement Compared by Jurisdiction

Catholic System

Involvement role	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	0	67	92	50
Classroom volunteer	-	-	92	69
Office or Library	100	67	92	44
Field trips/learning activities	100	100	92	69
School Meeting	100	33	69	50
Student supervision	100	100	100	-
Parent support	0	67	38	23
School Board meeting	0	33	92	44
Fund raising	100	100	92	60
Materials preparation	100	100	85	54

County System

Involvement role	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	50	67	75	29
Classroom volunteer	-	-	80	71
Office or Library	75	67	70	36
Field trips/learning activities	75	100	75	44
School Meeting	75	33	70	54
Student supervision	75	100	100	-
Parent support	25	0	25	12
School Board meeting	100	67	90	28
Fund raising	75	100	90	40
Materials preparation	75	100	60	34

Note. All numbers are percentages of total respondents.

Conclusions

This jurisdictional difference may be the result of experience with public operation of E.C.S. programs by the Catholic system providingdirect, positive experience with parent involvement. It may also reflect the effect of Catholicism as a unifying force within the jurisdiction (Henderson, 1988).

Large Urban/Small Rural Schools Comparisons

To consider these alternatives, schools were grouped as large urban (Harry Balfour and St. Patrick) and small rural (Hythe and St. Mary's). In each group, one school was Catholic and the other was County. Again, attitudes for each constituency were compared to overall averages (see Table 3).

In the large urban schools, administrators and teachers were positive towards parent involvement. Parents were less positive towards parent involvement than the overall average response of all parent respondents.

Table 3

Constituency Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement Compared by Large Urban/Small Rural Schools

Large urban schools

Involvement role	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	100	85	37
Classroom volunteer		85	71
Office or Library	75	90	43
Field trips/learning activities	100	85	52
School Meeting	25	75	51
Student supervision	100	100	-
Parent support	25	40	15
School Board meeting	75	100	32
Fund raising	100	95	42
Materials preparation	100	80	44

Small rural schools

Involvement role	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	0	77	37
Classroom volunteer	-	85	67
Office or Library	50	62	22
Field trips/learning activities	100	77	59
School Meeting	50	62	59
Student supervision	100	100	-
Parent support	50	15	22
School Board meeting	0	77	44
Fund raising	100	85	70
Materials preparation	100	54	30

Note. Numbers are percentages of total respondents

In small rural schools, school administrators and teachers were less positive towards parent involvement than their respective overall averages. Parents, however, were more positive than the overall parent average.

Conclusion

Comparing school results suggests that neither experience with E.C.S. operation nor Catholicism has an effect upon constituency support for parent involvement. The important difference appears to be school size and geographic location.

Preferred Activities for Parent Involvement

The differences in attitudes toward parent involvement between small rural and large urban schools may be a product of differences among administrators and teachers and their preferences for parent involvement activities. For example, administrators and teachers in small schools may fear that parent involvement will become parent control. In larger schools, such a possibility is

Table 4

Parent Involvement Activity Preferences of Administrators and Teachers Compared By Jurisdiction

Catholic System

Involvement role	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	7	5	2	5
Classroom volunteer	-	-	2	1
Office or Library	1	5	2	7
Field trips/learning activities	1	1	2	1
School Meeting	1	8	10	5
Student supervision	1	1	1	-
Parent support	7	5	8	10
School Board meeting	7	8	2	7
Fund raising	1	1	2	3
Materials preparation	1	1	8	4

County System

Involvement role	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Individual students	8	5	5	7
Classroom volunteer	-	-	4	1
Office or Library	2	5	7	5
Field trips/learning activities	2	1	5	3
School Meeting	2	8	7	2
Student supervision	2	1	1	-
Parent support	9	9	10	9
School Board meeting	1	5	2	8
Fund raising	2	1	2	4
Materials preparation	2	1	9	6

Note. Numbers are rank order of preference.

less likely, so that administrators and teachers are more supportive towards parent involvement. To consider these possibilities, Catholic and County administrators and teachers were compared according to their most and least preferred parent involvement activities (see Table 4).

Jurisdiction Comparisons

In the Catholic school system, central office administrators, school administrators and teachers agreed on both least and most preferred parent involvement activities. Most preferred was supervising children at special school outings and events. Helping to plan field trips and learning activities was also ranked as most preferred by administrators and ranked second by teachers. These groups also agreed in rating helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children as least preferred.

In the County school system, there was congruency on ranking as least preferred helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children. However, there was no agreement on

which activity was most preferred for parent involvement. Central office administrators selected attending a school board meeting about new playground equipment. School administrators supported four activities as most preferred: helping to plan and arrange field trips and learning activities, supervising children at special school outings and events, fund-raising, and preparing and duplicating materials for teachers. Teachers selected supervising children at special school outings and events.

Large Urban/Small Rural School Comparisons

In the small rural schools, all constituencies agreed that fund-raising was the most preferred activity for parent involvement. Parents and teachers also agreed that helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children was least preferred. School administrators selected helping individual students who are having difficulty and attending a school board meeting about new playground equipment as least preferred activities.

In the large urban schools, there was agreement among all constituencies that helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children was the least preferred activity. Administrators and teachers agreed that preferred activities for parent involvement were supervising children at special school outings and events, attending a school board meeting, and fund-raising. Parents did not share this ranking, placing the school board meeting as a least preferred activity and rating helping in their child's classroom and helping to plan and arrange field trips and learning activities as most preferred activities.

Comparing administrator opinions between these two groupings reveals further differences. In small rural schools, administrators ranked parent attendance at a school board meeting as a least preferred activity while administrators in large urban schools rated this as a most preferred activity. Small rural school administrators most preferred fund-raising as a parent involvement activity. Large urban school administrators most

preferred fund-raising as well as supervising children at special school outings and events and attending a school board meeting.

Conclusions

The more positive attitude towards parent involvement evident in large urban schools may be the result of positive administrator and teacher experiences with parent involvement. Even though administrators and teachers do not identify the same preferred activities as do parents, their enthusiasm for parent involvement may result in a sharing with parents a general support for parent activity in the school.

When the roles for parent participation mandated by E.C.S. (Alberta Education, 1984b) are compared to the most preferred activity ratings by small rural and large urban school administrators, divergence between the groups is very evident. Large urban school administrators supported activities that place parents in roles of volunteer assistants, adult learners, and decision makers. Small urban school administrators

preferred parent participation to be limited to the volunteer role.

The divergent views of school administrators may be a cause of the divergent attitudes toward parent involvement present within these two groups of schools. Positive experience with parents in decision-making roles may have encouraged the positive school attitude toward parent involvement evident in large urban schools. It may also be that a more general positive attitude toward parent involvement has developed in large urban schools, leading to an increase in support for decision-making roles for parents in those schools. A third possibility is that parents are involved in different types of activities in E.C.S. and the school in large urban schools, resulting in different attitudes toward parent involvement than exist in small rural schools where parents have had a different role to play.

Table 5

Parent Involvement Activities in E.C.S.

Involvement role	All Parents	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Helping teach children in the classroom	59.4	59.6	78.9	44.7	90.5
Helping handicapped children in the room	4.3	4.5	8.8	2.4	0.0
Attending meetings	65.4	62.1	68.4	65.0	90.5
Arranging field trips	30.3	27.3	28.1	35.8	33.4
Calling other parents with messages	37.6	40.9	35.1	29.3	62.0
Preparing newsletters and other letters home	17.8	10.6	22.8	22.0	28.6
Reading to children	33.8	31.3	49.1	26.0	62.0
Helping prepare material for classroom activities	48.1	47.5	49.2	43.9	63.0
Assisting on field trips	53.9	50.5	64.9	52.9	62.0
Supervising children during lunch hours or recess	41.6	43.9	73.0	15.5	90.5
Fund raising	28.5	21.3	31.5	36.6	42.9
Arranging special programs for parents	7.8	11.0	3.5	5.6	0.0

Note. Results are weighted scores of percentage of respondents and frequency of activity

Parent Activities in E.C.S. and School

Parent Activities in E.C.S.

Twelve activites for parent involvement were ranked by parents as to the number of times during their year in E.C.S. that they were engaged in those activites. Results were then combined to reflect both the frequency of such engagement and the number of parents involved in each activity (see Table 5).

Attendance at meetings was the most common activity involving the most parents, followed by helping teach children in the classroom, assisting with field trips, helping prepare material for classroom activities, and supervising children during lunch hours or recess. Activities involving parents least often were helping handicapped children in the classroom, arranging special programs for parents, and helping prepare newsletters.

Table 6

Parent Preferences for Involvement and Actual Activities in E.C.S. and School

Small rural schools

Involvement role	Preferred Activities	School Activities	E.C.S. Activities
Individual students	46.7	33.0	5.3
Classroom volunteer	72.3	53.7	74.3
Office or Library	45.7	78.7	42.3
Field trips/learning activities	82.0	94.7	41.3
School Meeting	70.0	42.7	95.3
Parent support	27.0	19.7	22.7
School Board meeting	51.7	19.7	95.3
Fund raising	80.0	79.3	44.3
Materials preparation	56.7	79.3	68.0
No involvement	1.7	3.3	0

Note. All numbers are percentages of total respondents.

Conclusions

Applying the parent participation roles of E.C.S. (Alberta Education, 1984b) to these results indicates that parents in E.C.S. are most involved as decision makers. Other most common activities are completed as classroom volunteers. Roles least often fulfilled are teachers of their own children and adult learners.

Preferred Activities

Parents were asked to rank nine activities in order of preference (see Table 6). Most preferred was to help in my child's classroom. Least preferred was attending a school board meeting about new playground equipment and helping other parents with their children. No involvement was preferred by 2% of all parent respondents.

These preferred activities were compared to actual activities in E.C.S. and to actual activities in school (see Table 6). Although parents least preferred attending meetings, they reported that this was their most common activity in E.C.S., followed closely by preparing and

duplicating materials for teachers (ranked fifth overall in preference). In school, parents reported school events and activities as their most common area of involvement (ranked second in preference), followed by assisting in the office or library (ranked sixth), fund-raising (ranked fourth), and preparation and duplication of materials for teachers (ranked fifth in preference).

Conclusions

From this comparison, it appears that the greatest opportunity for increased parent involvement in schools lies in having parents assist in classrooms (ranked first in preference but fourth in activity in E.C.S. and third in school activity). Schools involve parents least often in activities least preferred by parents (attending school meetings and helping other parents with their children).

In E.C.S., this comparison identifies four opportunities for increasing parent involvement. Parents are keen to be involved with their children to a greater degree than they have been

asked to be. The four areas in which parents would like to be more involved in E.C.S. are assisting children who are having difficulties, assisting in their child's classroom, assisting with field trips and learning activities, and fund-raising.

School by School Comparison

Parents in all four schools reported the same activities as being their most frequent opportunities for parent involvement. These were attending meetings in E.C.S. and helping with field trips and learning activities in school. There was similar agreement in rating assistance to individual children having difficulty as their least common activity in E.C.S. Parents in all schools most preferred helping in their child's classroom and least preferred helping other parents who are having difficulty with their children.

Parents in three schools, St. Patrick, St. Mary's and Hythe, agreed that helping other parents who were having difficulty with their

children and attending school board meetings were the activities for which they were least called upon in school. Parents in Harry Balfour disagreed, and reported attendance at school meetings about student behaviours as the least common parent involvement activity.

All schools reported more use of parents to help with students having difficulty than had happened in E.C.S. St. Mary's school made the greatest use of such help, with 43% of responding parents reporting that they had been involved in such activities.

Large Urban/Small Rural Schools Comparison

Four aspects of parent involvement indicated differences based on school size and location. Helping in your child's classroom was a more common activity for parents in both E.C.S. and school classrooms in small rural schools than it was in large urban schools. Parents in small rural schools preferred less involvement in the office or library and in fund-raising than did parents in large urban schools. In both of the

large urban schools, some parents preferred no involvement, but this response was not given by any parent in small rural schools.

Comparison of actual frequency of involvement in E.C.S. using the combined scores revealed several differences between small rural and large urban schools. Parents in small rural schools reported more activity in helping teach children in the classroom, in reading to children, in helping prepare materials for classroom activities, in assisting on field trips, and in supervising children during lunch hours or recess than did parents in large urban schools.

Comparison of total parent activity in E.C.S. revealed that parents in St. Mary's were the most active, followed by Hythe parents. Parents in the large urban schools were much less active in their E.C.S.

Conclusions

Using the parent participation roles specified by E.C.S. (Alberta Education, 1984b) reveals that parents in small rural schools are

more active as classroom volunteers and as teachers than are parents in large urban schools. Parent preference for involvement activities are not addressed within E.C.S. or school parent involvement strategies. Parents prefer roles as classroom volunteers, but ranked this involvement as fourth in frequency in E.C.S. and third in school. Decision-making is least preferred by parents but is the most common parent involvment opportunity in E.C.S.

A larger percentage of parents in small rural schools are actively involved than of parents in large urban schools. Parents in small rural schools spend more time assisting in their children's classrooms and express less desire to assist in the office or library or with fund-raising than do parents in large urban schools.

Effect of Leadership Experience

Parents were asked to identify executive positions they held during their child's year in E.C.S. Parents with such experience were then

Table 7

E.C.S. Executive Experience and Parent Preferences for Involvement

Parents with E.C.S. executive experience

Involvement role	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Individual students	31	63	67	25
Classroom volunteer	92	75	80	75
Office or Library	69	13	67	25
Field trips/learning activities	62	50	80	100
School Meeting	54	38	67	50
Parent support	8	13	35	50
School Board meeting	31	63	60	50
Fund raising	38	75	80	100
Materials preparation	77	25	60	75
No involvement	0	0	7	0

Parents without E.C.S. executive experience

Involvement role	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Individual students	24	36	56	35
Classroom volunteer	70	55	72	68
Office or Library	33	27	44	36
Field trips/learning activities	37	55	68	48
School Meeting	50	72	44	50
Parent support	9	27	24	15
School Board meeting	24	18	36	26
Fund raising	33	55	40	38
Materials preparation	26	27	56	36
No involvement	4	0	4	5

Note. All numbers are percentages of total respondents.

compared to parents without executive experience. School by school analysis revealed that within each school no difference in preference for specific parent involvement activities existed between the two groups. However, parents within one school did not agree with the preferences of parents in other schools (see Table 7).

Analysis of responses by parents in each school did reveal that a larger percentage of parents with E.C.S. executive experience were more willing to be involved than were parents without that experience. The experienced group selected its top three preferences as planning field trips, helping in their child's classroom, and attending school board meetings.

Parents without executive experience ranked their preferences as helping in their child's classroom, meeting at school about student behaviours, and planning field trips. Parents without E.C.S. executive experience were almost twice as apt to prefer no involvement as were parents with such experience.

Large Urban/Small Rural Schools Comparisons

In small rural schools, the tendency for parents with E.C.S. executive experience to be more active than parents without that experience held true for all activities except working in the office or library. Parents without E.C.S. executive experience were twice as apt to prefer such activity as were parents with executive experience.

Parents with E.C.S. executive experience in small rural schools were less likely to prefer working in the office or library, or attending meetings about student behaviours than were similar parents in large urban schools. Rural parents without executive experience were less inclined to attend school board meetings than were similar urban parents. All parents in small rural schools expressed more preference for fund-raising than did parents in large urban schools.

Comparison of the percentage of parent respondents who reported E.C.S. executive

Table 8

Percentage of Parents with E.C.S. Executive Experience

	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Parents with E.C.S executive experience	17.4	40.0	33.3	57.1
Parents without E.C.S. executive experience	68.1	45.0	55.6	28.6
No response	14.5	15.0	11.1	14.3

Note. Values are percentages of all parent respondents.

experience revealed another difference between small rural and large urban schools (see Table 8). A far larger percentage of parents in small rural schools have E.C.S. executive experience.

Attitudes Toward E.C.S. and School

Parents were asked to rank on a five-point scale how well each of eleven characteristics applied to E.C.S. and to school. Responses by parents with E.C.S. executive experience were compared to responses by parents without such experience (see Table 9).

There was no major difference between parent attitudes toward school in Harry Balfour and Hythe schools. In St. Patrick and St. Mary's, parents with E.C.S. executive experience were more positive toward school than were parents without that experience.

Ratings revealed differences in parent attitudes toward E.C.S. In Harry Balfour, St. Patrick, and St. Mary's, parents with E.C.S. executive experience were more positive towards E.C.S. than were parents without that experience.

Table 9

E.C.S. Executive Experience and Parent Attitudes Toward E.C.S. and School

A. Attitude toward E.C.S

	Parents with E.C.S executive experience	Parents without E.C.S executive experience
Harry Balfour	4.1	3.9
Hythe	3.7	3.7
St. Patrick's	4.3	4.0
St. Mary's	3.5	3.4
All parents	3.9	3.7

B. Attitude toward school

	Parents with E.C.S executive experience	Parents without E.C.S executive experience
Harry Balfour	3.4	3.4
Hythe	3.1	3.1
St. Patrick's	4.9	4.0
St. Mary's	3.5	3.2
All parents	3.9	3.4

Note. Values are average rating (1-5 scale) on eleven characteristics.

In Hythe, there was no difference in parent ratings. However, when compared to the average ratings assigned by all parents, ratings for E.C.S. in Hythe and St. Mary's, the small rural schools, were below average while those in the large urban schools, St. Patrick and Harry Balfour, were above average.

Conclusions

Both parents with and without E.C.S. executive experience prefer the same types of involvement. However, the preferred decision-making role differs from jurisdictional level (school board meetings) for parents with E.C.S. executive experience to school level for parents without that experience. This may be an outcome of the executive experience itself promoting a broader interest in the control of educational processes.

Parents with E.C.S. executive experience are more desirous of involvement than are parents without executive experience. However, that desire to be involved may be the reason that these

parents accepted executive roles rather than an outcome of the executive experience itself.

That a larger percentage of parents in small rural schools have E.C.S. executive experience is probably because there are fewer parents available to accept such positions in smaller schools. This fact may also affect overall parent attitudes in these small rural schools.

Parents of children in small rural schools are less positive toward their E.C.S. program than are parents in large urban schools. Attitudes toward school do not reveal a similar pattern based on school size.

Years Since E.C.S.

Parent preferences for involvement activities were compared for parents whose youngest child was enrolled in Grade One and for those whose youngest child was enrolled in Grade Five. Parents of Grade Five students were more willing to be involved in all areas except attending school meetings about student behaviour and helping other parents with their children (see Table 10).

Table 10

Parent Preferences for Involvement and Years Since E.C.S. Activity

Involvement role	Youngest child in grade 1	5
Individual students	44.7	32.0
Classroom volunteer	66.7	53.7
Office or Library	19.7	32.0
Field trips/learning activities	52.3	73.7
School Meeting	70.0	39.3
Parent support	29.3	9.7
School Board meeting	32.3	65.0
Fund raising	37.0	64.3
Materials preparation	28.0	56.7
No involvement	0.0	0.0

Note. All numbers are percentages of total respondents.

This willingness to be involved to a greater degree than parents of children in Grade One appears to contradict research (Epstein, 1986). It may be that the emphasis upon decision-making in E.C.S. is resulting in the "burn-out" of parents whose children are enterring Grade One. It may also be that the willingness of parents in upper elementary grades to be involved is not being addressed by teachers and administrators in those grades. This possibility was not explored by this study.

Because of the small sample of parents included in this study, it was not possible to compare school results. Hythe parent respondents did not include any whose youngest child was enrolled in Grade Five and the St. Mary's sample did not include parents whose youngest children were enrolled in Grade One.

Table 11

Parent Access to Information

A. Should parents have the right to ask about any aspect of how the school is run?

	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Yes	75	100	91	100
No	25	0	9	0

B. Whom should the parents be able to ask?

	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Teacher	100	100	91	97
Principal	100	100	97	99
Superintendent	100	83	85	82
School board	100	67	67	89
Department of Education	100	50	52	68
Premier	50	33	40	49

Note. Values are percentages of total respondents.

Degree of Parent Involvement

Control and Influence over School Operations

Each respondent was asked whether parents should have the right to ask about any aspect of how the school is being run. This right is given to the school councils mandated by the Alberta School Act (1988). Respondents were also asked who parents should be able to ask. Results are summarized in Table 11.

Central office administrators expressed concerns about releasing contents of student records, especially for special education students, and about "confidential matters" such as personnel records. A minority (9%) of teachers expressed concerns about releasing information to parents not directly involved with an issue, or of talking to someone who does not appreciate the sensitivity of the issue. One teacher wrote, "If it does not apply to their child, it is of no concern to them". Another was concerned that

parent calls for more information were from those who had "trivial concerns".

The majority of teachers supported parents' right to know. Some cited the parent's role as primary educator of the child. Many upheld the parents' right to be informed as arising from their support for the school through taxes. Others upheld parents' role as parents of the children being served by the school. One teacher felt that parents needed to be informed so that they could come to understand "the limitations teachers operate under".

School administrators and parents expressed no reservations about parents having the right to ask. Most parent comments were "This is my child and I have the right to know all about his/her education" and "We pay for the schools so we have the right to know".

When asked to indicate who parents should be able to ask, teachers were not unanimously in favor of having parents ask the teacher first. This was a surprising outcome, perhaps suggesting that some teachers preferred to have

administrators and others handle parents and their requests for information.

School administrators and most teachers preferred to have parents keep their questions within the school, with the Superintendent being the next and last level of appeal. Going beyond the Superintendent to the School Board, to Alberta Education officials, and to the Premier were successively less preferred avenues for parent queries.

Central office administrators supported parent rights up to Alberta Education officials, but excluding the Premier. Perhaps central office administrators have more experience, and therefore more confidence, in the procedures by which parent queries are handled by the School Board and by Alberta Education than do school administrators and teachers.

Parents appeared to lack confidence in the Superintendent as a source of information beyond the school, rating the Superintendent lower than the School Board. Perhaps the Superintendent is viewed as another administrator who will support

the school principal. Half of the parent respondents would contact the Premier, even though the Premier has no direct involvement in the operation of schools. This may indicate that parents are willing to use political power to secure information if appeals to local officials fail.

Control and Influence over Curriculum

All constituencies were unanimously in favor of parent rights to ask about any aspect of the curriculum. Most parent comments were "This is my child and I have a right to know what is being taught to him/her". Most teacher and administrator comments were "Why not?". Obviously, access to information about curriculum is not an issue to promote disagreement among the constituencies.

Control and Influence over Teachers

Asked if parents should have the right to change teachers, constituencies revealed very different responses. Central office administrators were most opposed. Few comments

were offered, but one administrator did write "I would resist, but if given very compelling reasons, then OK".

School administrators and teachers shared concerns about such changes being made because of misinformation and misperceptions. One school administrator estimated that 80% of such requests were due to "misperceptions". Another felt that mid-year changes should be discouraged, but that parent input in selecting teachers for the next year was appropriate.

While most teachers supported parents' rights to make such requests, those opposed appear to hold very strong opinions against such moves. One wrote that parents should not have this "clout, or they will expect it all the time". Another wrote that "we can't have kids transferring every time there is the slightest disagreement". A third opposed such changes because "children need to learn to overcome these problems". Counter arguments were less strident and upheld such changes if they were "in the child's best interests".

Table 12

Perceptions of Success of Parent Requests for Change of Teacher

What do you think the chance would be of making a change in teacher for your child at school?

	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
Very Good	100	25	50	46
Average	-	50	41	40
Very little	-	25	9	14

Note. Values are percentages of all parent respondents.

Parents were strongly in favor of their right to request such a change. Most comments indicated concerns about conflicts between teacher and child, or about acting in the best interests of the child. One parent may have summarized the general opinion best: "My child's education is more important than anything else".

Asked to indicate how successful such a request would be, constituents agreed that the chances were not very good (see Table 12). Parent comments indicated that experience had taught them of the difficulty in achieving such changes: "I've tried and nothing was done"; "The principal didn't make time to talk to me"; "My comments were received graciously but little concrete change resulted". A few parents who had not yet tried to make such changes rated their chances of success as very good because, as one parent wrote, "I would create a living hell at school". Several parents indicated that they have successfully negotiated such a change in teachers. One parent wrote "I've never been given reason to believe

Table 13

School Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of Success of Parent Requests for Change of Teacher

What do you think the chance would be of making a change in teacher for your child at school?

	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Very Good	46	28	56	25
Average	43	50	27	50
Very little	11	22	15	25

Note. Values are combined teacher and administrator responses.

that my wishes would not be honored". Obviously, parent opinions varied greatly, depending upon personal experience with the school.

The opposition to such changes expressed by school administrators and teachers became clearer when school results were examined (see Table 13). In small rural schools, there was only one teacher per grade. In St. Mary's, one teacher was assigned to three grades in a multi-grade classroom. To change a teacher here would mean termination of the teacher's contract. Administrator and teacher negative comments in these schools reflected concerns about tenure and job security. In large urban schools, where more than one classroom exists at each grade level, such a request for change in teacher only implies a child's transfer from one classroom to another. In these schools, teachers and administrators were more amenable to such requests.

Conclusion

Constituencies share support for parent rights to request information about any aspect of

the school's operation or about the curriculum being presented to children. However, there is disagreement about granting to parents influence over teacher assignment and tenure issues. Parents believe that they should have the right to change their children's teachers if necessary, but experience has taught them that such changes will not happen often. Administrators and teachers share reluctance to see parents gain this influence.

Communication Patterns

Who Should Contact Parents?

Central office administrators were very supportive of improved communication with parents, and rated teachers as preferred over principals or vice-principals for maintaining such communication. Teachers shared this view of their role, with one major exception. Central office administrators supported personal visits to the child's home by teachers, but teachers rated these as their least preferred method of communicating

with parents. Only 18% of the teacher respondents supported such visits.

School administrators were more willing to fulfill communication roles than central office administrators felt they ought to be. This may be because school administrators become involved in parent complaints and queries, which changes their view of communication with the home. Central office administrators may hold a more generic and positive view of communication links with parents.

How Are Parents Contacted?

Teachers were asked to indicate how they had contacted parents so far this school year. Most common strategies were telephone calls, reported by 100% of the respondents, informal chats while the parent is in the school (97%), report cards (97%), and parent-teacher interviews (94%).

Parent responses indicated that most parents had been contacted by report cards (96%) and parent-teacher interviews (92%). Although all teachers reported using the telephone to contact parents, only 47% of responding parents reported

receiving such calls. Similar disparities exist between teacher use of written notes (88%) and invitations for parents to observe in the classroom (52%) and the percentage of parents who received such communications (55% and 30%, respectively).

It appears that teachers endeavour to maintain communication with parents using a variety of strategies. However, the number of parents receiving such communications remains low once report cards and parent-teacher interviews are discounted.

Why Are Parents Contacted?

Central office and school administrators supported all of the suggested reasons for communicating with parents, although school administrators were less likely to ask parents for ideas than were central office administrators (see Table 14). Teachers shared this reluctance to seek parent input.

Most common reasons given by teachers for communicating with parents were to report

Table 14

Reasons to Contact Parents

	Central Office Administrators	School Administrators	Teachers	Parents
To inform of school events	100	100	88	61
To report learning problems	100	100	94	21
To share good news	100	100	79	28
To ask for help	100	100	79	53
To report behavior problems	100	100	94	19
To ask for ideas	100	50	15	16
No contact	0	0	0	6

Note. Values are percentages of total respondents.

learning, behaviour or attendance problems. However, the least number of responding parents reported such communication with the school. In spite of teacher and administrator support for sharing good news with parents, only 28% of responding parents had received good news communications. The most common form of communication between the school and parents was information about school events and activities, followed by requests for help with those activities.

Some parents (6.4%) reported that they had not been contacted by the school at all. These parents all had children enrolled in large urban schools.

Conclusion

Schools are supportive of communication with parents, and see this as an important part of a teacher's duties. Teachers are using a variety of strategies to contact parents. However, teachers communicate most with parents of troublesome children, and these communications involve a

minority of parents. Most parents hear from the school at report card time or when the school needs their help or attendance at events and activities.

Attitudes Toward School and E.C.S.

All constituencies were asked to rate their school and their E.C.S. by how well each had achieved eleven characteristics related to parent involvement. All constituencies rated E.C.S. as more successful in achieving these strategies than the school, with the exception of parents in St. Patrick School who rated them as being equal.

When characteristics were compared as to highest and lowest rated, there was total agreement among the constituencies on the school ratings (see Table 15). Top ratings were given for keeping parents informed and permitting parents to ask about any aspect of the school operation. Lowest ratings were given for offering parenting programs and for giving parents input to classroom operation.

Table 15

Constituency Attitudes Toward School and E.C.S. Success in Promoting Parent Involvement

A. Highest rated characteristics

	For school	For E.C.S.
Central Office Administrators	Parents can ask about any aspect of how the classroom and school is run	Parents can ask about any aspect of how the classroom and school is run
School Administrators	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis Parents are encouraged to share their skills at school
Teachers	Parents can ask about any aspect of how the classroom and school is run	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis
Parents	Parents can ask about any aspect of how the classroom and school is run	Teachers enjoy having parents help in the classroom Parents feel comfortable in the school and classroom

B. Lowest rated characteristics

	For school	For E.C.S.
Central office Administrators	Parents have input to the way the classroom is operated	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents
School Administrators	Parents have input to the way the classroom is operated	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents Parents help their children at home with school work
Teachers	Parents have input to the way the classroom is operated The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents
Parents	Parents have input to the way the classroom is operated	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents Parents have input to the way the classroom is operated

Ratings for E.C.S. revealed considerable disagreement. Central office administrators gave top ratings for letting parents ask about any aspect of the operation. School administrators gave top ratings for encouraging parents to share their skills at school and for keeping parents informed. Teachers gave top ratings for keeping parents informed and for letting parents ask about any aspect of the operation. Parents gave top ratings for teachers who enjoy having parents in the classroom and for making parents feel comfortable in the classroom.

Lowest ratings for E.C.S. were given by all constituencies for offering parenting programs. School administrators also rated E.C.S. as low in having parents help their children at home with school work. Parents rated E.C.S. low in giving parents input to the way the classroom is operated.

School by School Comparison

Parents in small rural schools were less positive in rating their school than were parents

Table 16

Parent Attitudes Toward E.C.S. Success in Promoting Parent Involvement

Involvement role	All Parents	Harry Balfour	Hythe	St. Patrick's	St. Mary's
Helping teach children in the classroom	4.2	4.1	3.8	4.4	4.0
Helping handicapped children in the room	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.0
Attending meetings	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.7	1.7
Arranging field trips	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.3
Calling other parents with messages	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.1	2.9
Preparing newsletters and other letters home	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.4	3.4
Reading to children	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.6
Helping prepare material for classroom activities	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.0
Assisting on field trips	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.3
Supervising children during lunch hours or recess	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.3
Fund raising	4.0	4.1	3.6	4.2	2.6
Arranging special programs for parents	4.0	4.0	3.7	4.1	3.5

Note. Values are average rating (1-5 scale) on eleven characteristics.

in large urban schools. The characteristics which these parents rated significantly lower were the offering of parenting programs and having parents help in the school in other ways than with school work.

However, comparison of E.C.S. ratings identified important differences between small rural and large urban schools (see Table 16). Parents in the small rural schools were less positive in their ratings of their E.C.S. program in seven of the eleven characteristics. Average ratings revealed that parents in small rural schools were less positive about their E.C.S. program in general than were parents in large urban schools.

Seven of the eleven parent involvement characteristics were rated lower for E.C.S. by parents in small rural schools than by parents in large urban schools. These seven characteristics were informing parents about the children's learning program, offering parenting programs, asking for parent input to plans and decisions,

giving parents input to classroom operation, maintaining regular patterns of communication, permitting parents to ask about any aspect of the operation, and having parents help in ways other than with school work.

Conclusion

Parents in small rural schools are not as positive about their experiences in E.C.S. as parents in large urban schools in this study. This difference is evident in the majority of characteristics of the E.C.S. program, suggesting that these rural E.C.S. programs are not having positive impacts upon parents. This less positive view of E.C.S. is paralleled by a less positive ranking of school, suggesting that the experiences of parents in small rural E.C.S. programs in this study are resulting in parents who remain less positive towards the local school.

The seven characteristics on which rural parents were less positive can be organized into three categories. Two characteristics are concerned with communication, which this study

revealed is held to be a teacher's function by administrators and by teachers. Three characteristics deal with parent input to operations and decision-making processes. These concern an administrator's roles. The final two characteristics, parenting programs and involvement in other than school work, are reflections of general parent involvement directions contained in Alberta's E.C.S. philosophy.

This secondary categorization of these seven characteristics suggests that both teachers and administrators in small rural schools in this study may be less supportive of parent involvement than teachers and administrators in large urban schools. The effect is that involvement as defined by the E.C.S. model is not being achieved.

Summary

Analysis of the data revealed that there is congruency among the constituencies in attitudes towards parent involvement in the Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28.

Similar congruency was not found among the constituencies in the County of Grande Prairie No. 1. Very little support was found for the E.C.S. model of parent involvement requiring parents to function as decision-makers.

Constituencies both agreed and disagreed with one another depending on the particular aspect of parent involvement and upon the desirability of having parents function as decision-makers. Within constituencies, there was divergence of opinion depending upon the size and geographic location of the school, upon the parent's E.C.S. executive experience, and between Catholic and County constituency members.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview of the Study

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which four educational constituencies (Reid, 1985) shared perceptions about parent involvement in elementary education. The four constituencies were central office administrators, school administrators, teachers and parents. This study focused upon the model of parent involvement organized within Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) (Alberta Education, 1984b). E.C.S. places parents in positions of responsibility and control over all aspects of program planning, implementation and evaluation. Other models of parent involvement exist (Bauch, Vietze, & Morris, 1973; Epstein, 1988; Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, & True, 1977; Tangri & Moles in Secada, 1989; Williams & Stallworth in Henderson, 1988), but this decision-making role appears to be

the basis for increased roles for parent involvement mandated within the Alberta School Act.

The study included four research questions: (a) What kind of parent involvement, if any, is being supported by each of the educational constituencies? (b) Is there congruency and consistency within this support as to the type of parent involvement preferred, and, if so, does it represent congruence with the type of parent involvement specified within E.C.S.? (c) Is there congruency and consistency among different educational constituencies in these views? (d) Is there congruency and consistency of view within each constituency?

Conceptual Framework

The Alberta School Act specifies that these councils are to be formed by parents and mandates wide-ranging advisory and decision-making powers (Alberta School Act, 1988). Constituency experience with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement may have influenced the development of

the school council as a vehicle for meeting increased calls for increased parent involvement in elementary education. However, the voluntary nature of E.C.S. means that not all school jurisdictions operate E.C.S. programs, and that not all members of the educational constituencies will have shared that experience with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement.

The concept of educational constituencies can be used to explain how change could be possible in educational institutions (Reid, 1985). An educational constituency consists of people sharing common interests that can be served by a common curricula. Once the educational constituencies share a common vision and purpose, they may act through political systems as well as with the local schools to secure their objectives (Edelstein, 1986; LaRocque, 1986; Tosi & Carroll, 1976). This study attempted to identify the existence of such common interests.

Significance of the Study

Evolving societal trends suggest that expectations for parent involvement consistent with the society for which Alberta's E.C.S. was originally designed may no longer be relevant (Mayfield, 1987; Sava, 1989; Vogel, 1975). The study includes two school jurisdictions. One is Catholic and has been operating E.C.S. programs for more than ten years. The other is a public system operating within the County organization and has not included E.C.S. in its operation, although it was expanding into that program during the period of this study. These jurisdictions serve coterminus areas, and operate both rural and urban schools. Their educational constituencies were assumed to be reflective of Alberta's present society and its attitudes towards parent involvement.

The School Act prescribes school councils and parent involvement for all schools (Alberta School Act, 1988). Attitudinal differences among the educational constituencies arising from varying

degrees of experience with E.C.S. may have implications for the success schools and school jurisdictions have in implementing school councils effectively.

The degree of congruence among the constituencies in their attitudes toward parent involvement has significance for the decision to mandate parent involvement for all schools in Alberta. The experiences that the educational constituencies have or do not have with E.C.S. may determine how the constituencies perceive of the school councils and of the role of parents in schools.

Methodology

Three questionnaires were developed by the researcher to have the four constituencies reveal their attitudes toward aspects of parent involvement. The questionnaires included the same questions for all respondents, with slight wording changes to make each question relevant to the particular constituency. Additional information was requested on questionnaires for individual

constituencies. Respondents were given opportunities to provide written comments in addition to the solicited answer format for each question.

A pilot questionnaire was administered to a jurisdiction neighboring the study area. Results were used to develop the final three questionnaires.

Results were complied through descriptive analysis. Response percentages were calculated for each item to determine the degree of congruency present for each constituency. Comparisons of degree of congruency were made between constituencies and within constituency groups. Related items were compared to determine the degree to which E.C.S. and school experiences had affected constituency attitudes toward parent involvement. Results were also compared by school jurisdiction, by individual school, and by school size and location. Because not all respondents were randomly selected, measures of significance were not calculated.

Limitations to the Study

The study was limited to two jurisdictions in the Peace region of Alberta. One jurisdiction is Catholic and has been operating E.C.S.programs for many years. The other system is public and has only recently extended its operation to include E.C.S. so that the parents included in this study had experience with a private E.C.S. operation.

A total of ten administrators, 33 teachers and 141 parents responded to questionnaires. This sample included representation from all segments of each constituency. The self-reporting nature of the questionnaires may have made some data unreliable, so the study focussed on general trends and attitudes rather than specific or individual reports. Respondents were selected from elementary schools offering grades one to six.

Summary of the Findings

Data gathered from the questionnaires were summarized and compared using descriptive statistics within four general issues. Ratings of

the most preferred and least preferred responses were made for selected items to clarify trends within constituencies.

The first issue on which results were analyzed concerned constituency attitudes toward parent involvement. Responses were compared on a school by school basis. Further analyses were made by comparing jurisdictional results and then by comparing responses from small rural schools to those from large urban schools.

The second issue concerned what parents do as parent involvement activities. Roles desired by parents were compared to actual parent involvement experience in both E.C.S. and school.

The third issue concerned the effect of experience with E.C.S. upon parent attitudes toward parent involvement in elementary education. Experience in an E.C.S. executive position was compared to preferred roles in parent involvement and to attitudes toward school. The length of time since the parent's child was enrolled in E.C.S. was compared to the parent's attitudes towards parent involvement in the school.

The fourth issue concerned communication and parent involvement roles within schools and E.C.S. Attitudes towards decision-making roles for parents were compared. The methods used by schools to solicit parent involvement and the reasons for such solicitation were compared to attitudes towards parent involvement. Finally, attitudes toward E.C.S. were compared to attitudes toward school, using parent involvement activities and strategies as comparative characteristics.

Conclusions

Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement

Congruence does not exist among the constituencies in their attitudes towards parent involvement. This divergence is not attributable to jurisdictional experience with E.C.S. operation nor to Catholic biases towards parent involvement (Coleman in Henderson, 1988). The important differences appear to be school size and geographic location. Constituency attitudes in small rural schools are less positive towards

parent involvement than are those in large urban schools in this study.

Preferred Activities for Parent Involvement

School administrators in small rural schools do not support parent involvement to the same degree and in the same roles as do school administrators in large urban schools in this study. School administrators in large urban schools support activities that place parents in roles of classroom volunteers, adult learners, and decision makers. Small urban school administrators prefer that parent participation be limited to the role of classroom volunteer.

Parent roles and attitudes towards parent involvement also vary. Parents in small rural schools are more active as classroom volunteers and as teachers than are parents in large urban schools in this study. A larger percentage of parents are involved in small rural schools than in large urban schools. Parents in small rural schools spend more time assisting in their children's classrooms, and express less desire to

help in the school office or library than do parents in large urban schools.

There is a lack of congruence between constituencies in attitudes toward the proper role for parents. Parents prefer classroom volunteer roles, but this preference is not reflected in actual roles filled by parents in E.C.S. or in school. Decision-making is the role least preferred by parents, but it is the most common parent involvement activity in E.C.S. reported in this study.

Effect of Leadership Experience

Parents with and without E.C.S. executive experience in this sample prefer the same types of parent involvement. However, parents with such experience prefer to be involved with decision making at the jurisdictional level while parents without E.C.S. executive experience prefer to be involved with decision making at the school level. Parents with E.C.S. executive experience are more desirous of parent involvement than are parents without such experience, although this may be a

characteristic of such parents rather than a product of serving on an E.C.S. executive.

A larger percentage of parents in small rural schools have E.C.S. executive experience than do parents in large urban schools. Both groups of parents in small rural schools are less positive toward E.C.S.than are similar parents in large urban schools, although no similar difference in attitude exists toward school.

The length of time since the parent's youngest child was enrolled in school does not negatively effect the parent's desire to be involved in the school. Parents whose youngest child is enrolled in Grade Five were more willing to be involved than were parents whose youngest child was enrolled in Grade One.

Degree of Parent Involvement

Constituencies are congruent in their support of the right of parents to ask about any aspect of the school's operation and about the curriculum being taught to their children. However, there is disagreement among the constituencies on parental

influence over issues of teacher assignment and tenure. Parents believe they should have such an influence, although their experiences with schools have taught them that it is unlikely that they will be successful in exercising such power. Administrators and teachers are reluctant to see parents granted such influence.

Communication with parents is agreed by administrators and teachers to be a teacher's duty. Teachers are using a variety of strategies to communicate with parents, but the majority of their communication concerns troublesome children and involves a minority of parents. Most parents hear from the school through report cards and at parent-teacher interviews.

Parents in small rural schools are not as positive about E.C.S. as are parents in large urban schools. This negative view is expressed about the majority of parent involvement characteristics of E.C.S., so that E.C.S. is not having a positive impact upon these parents. Parents in small rural schools are also less positive toward school, suggesting that the less

than positive E.C.S. experience is having a lasting impact on these parents.

The Study Questions

This study posed four questions concerning the degree of constituency support for the call for increased parent involvement in education in Alberta. This study also considered the effect upon constituency attitudes of Alberta's experience with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement.

The first question asked what kind of parent involvement, if any, is being supported by each of the constituencies in the study. The study identified divergence between the County of Grande Prairie No. 1, in which E.C.S. programs have been offered by a private society, and Grande Prairie Roman Catholic School System No. 28, which has and continues to operate its own E.C.S. programs. Catholic school administrators, teachers and parents agreed that helping individual students was the most preferred activity for parents while helping other parents with their children was the

least preferred activity. Within the County, no such congruency was apparent. Further, the Catholic constituencies, with the exception of central office administrators, were more positive towards parent involvement than were the County constituencies.

The second question asks about congruency of attitudes toward parent involvement with the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. Parents in this study reported involvement in E.C.S. as decision-makers, but they preferred to act as classroom volunteers. Within the parent group, further divergence was present based upon a parent's experience or lack of experience in an E.C.S. executive position. Parents with such experience were more supportive of involvement than were parents without that experience. However, this experienced group still desired classroom volunteer roles that would enable them to work with their children over decision-making roles. Principals and teachers in large urban schools were supportive of decision-making roles for parents, but their colleagues in small rural

schools were not supportive of parent roles other than as classroom volunteers. Although particular members of each constituency supported the decision-making model of parent involvement mandated for E.C.S., there was considerable divergence within constituencies in their support of the E.C.S. model. In general, the constituencies in this study did not support the E.C.S. model.

The third research question considered the congruence or divergence present among the constituencies in their attitudes toward parent involvement. Parents, teachers and administrators were congruent in their support of parents as classroom volunteers. There was similar congruence on parents' rights to ask about school operations and curricula. However, the issue of teacher assignment and tenure revealed considerable divergence of support for parents as decision-makers in such matters. Teachers and administrators strongly disagreed with parents having influence over these matters while parents felt very strongly that they should have such

influence. The constituencies exhibited congruence in attitudes toward parent involvement, dependent upon the role and, in the decision-making role, dependent upon the aspect of the school being considered.

The fourth question considered the presence of congruence or divergence within each constituency. In this study, divergence was evident among teacher and administrator constituencies, dependent upon geographic location and size of the school. Teachers and administrators in small rural schools were less supportive of parent involvement than were their colleagues in large urban schools. Parents showed divergence in several dimensions. Parents in small rural schools were less positive toward both E.C.S. and school as supportive of parent involvement than were parents in large urban schools. Parents with E.C.S. executive experience were more supportive of parent involvement and jurisdictional involvement than were parents without that experience, who preferred school-level involvement. Parents whose youngest

child was enrolled in Grade Five were more supportive of parent involvement than were parents whose youngest child was in Grade One.

Jurisdictional divergence was also evident. All constituencies in the Catholic jurisdiction in this study were more positive toward parent involvement than were the constituencies in the County jurisdiction. Each of the educational constituencies lacked a consistent and congruent attitude towards parent involvement.

Implications

The results of this study posit implications for jurisdictions attempting to implement the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. They also hold implications for successful implementation of the school councils mandated by the School Act. There are also implications for administrators and jurisdictions implementing parent involvement within schools. Finally, the study suggests important implications for Alberta's E.C.S. philosophy and practice. Several of these implications will require further study before

provincial patterns and conclusions can be generalized.

Implications for Implementation of E.C.S.

Existing E.C.S. regulations specify a decision-making role for parents that is to include all aspects of program design, implementation and evaluation. Parents in this study reported that they prefer classroom volunteer roles rather than decision-making roles, even though they also report that most of their involvement in E.C.S. has been in decision-making. This study appears to suggest that present E.C.S. practice within school jurisdictions is not successfully illustrating to parents the value of decision-making roles. It may also suggest that the E.C.S. model is not consistent with parent preferences for involvement activities.

If jurisdictions are to be successful in implementing the E.C.S. model of parents as decision-makers, it seems that perhaps parents are involved in meetings that do not clearly focus upon active input and debate. If parents see their decision-making as simply approving what is

presented to them, they may come to see the exercise as time-consuming but unrewarding. Teachers and administrators will need to plan strategies for parent involvement that provide opportunities for parents to offer ideas, to debate those ideas as alternatives equal in merit to those offered by teachers and administrators, and to select actions most appropriate to the desired outcomes of the program.

The less positive E.C.S. experience identified by the study in the small rural schools sample suggests that administrators and teachers in these schools are most in need of training and practice in such parent involvement strategies. When compared to large urban schools, a greater percentage of parents in rural schools are involved generally and in E.C.S. executive positions and are less inclined toward involvement roles seen as clerical or administrative support. Comparing these results to the rural school administrators' preference to see parent involvement restricted to such support roles, suggests that rural school administrators and

parents may be on a collision course, or that these divergent views place them on parallel paths that will not converge productively.

Parents are unanimous in their view that they should be able to have influence over all aspects of the school's operation, curriculum offerings and teacher assignment. It seems that such influence is implied within the evaluation aspect of the E.C.S. model. Unless a more positive and supportive view of parents as decision-makers is adopted by rural teachers and school administrators, it seems likely that the negative attitudes toward school and E.C.S. identified by this study will continue to be developed in rural schools. Parents in this sample reported negative experiences with these schools on issues of teacher assignment.

Rural E.C.S. programs are also less successful in communicating with parents, according to the respondents in this study. This study identified administrator and teacher congruency that communication with parents is a teacher's responsibility. However, the study also

revealed that most teacher communication with parents concerns troublesome children and involves a minority of parents. Schools need to establish positive communication links with parents. They also need to design communication processes that actively seek parent input of ideas and reactions.

If the E.C.S. model of parent involvement is to be implemented successfully, this study suggests that administrators and teachers need additional skills in cooperative decision-making and in communication. Without attention to these skills, teachers and administrators will continue to see parents with less positive attitudes toward E.C.S. and school.

Implications for Implementation of School Councils

This study identified a lack of support by rural school administrators for parents engaging in decision-making roles. This study identified generalized support for the right of parents to seek information about school operation and curriculum. This study also identified a potential for conflict over parent rights to

influence matters of teacher assignment and tenure.

School councils are mandated by the School Act to be composed primarily of parents and to be able to advise the principal or the school board on any matter pertaining to the operation of the school. The success of school administrators in working with school councils appears to be dependent upon how successful school administrators can become with developing positive and effective communication and decision-making links with parents on the school council. In E.C.S. programs in rural schools, parents report that their input to decisions is sought less often than such input is requested within urban schools. So long as rural school administrators continue to prefer that parent involvement be limited to classroom support roles, it seems likely that school councils in rural schools either will be ineffective in providing input or will become arenas for conflict between administrators resisting parent input and parents insisting upon their right to have such influence.

The potential for such conflict was reflected by the parent who, if denied influence over teacher assignment, would "create a living hell at school". Such vehemence may be limited to this parent, but many others expressed their willingness to insist upon influence over matters of teacher assignment and tenure. Teachers and administrators strongly resist parent influence over these issues. If school councils pursue the right to provide input on any matter pertaining to school operation, the issue of teacher assignment and tenure may well become a topic of conflict.

The majority of parents in this study desired parent involvment roles as volunteers in the classroom. Decision-making roles were least preferred by most parents. Parents with experience on E.C.S. executives preferred decision-making roles at the jurisdictional level while parents without this experience preferred such involvement at the school level. The establishment of school councils to be composed primarily of parents raises the question of which parents will sit on these councils.

Parents with decision-making experience gained through their roles on E.C.S. executive committees are likely to avoid school councils that do not provide opportunities to influence jurisdictional practices. If these parents leave, they will be replaced by parents without experience in the decision-making process. This study also indicates that parents have not had positive experiences with providing input to school decisions, particularly in the rural schools in this study. A school council composed of inexperienced parents unskilled in providing input may well result in ineffectual or strife-torn councils, particularly when rural school administrators are not supportive of parents in such input and decision-making roles.

The generalized division between small rural schools and large urban schools in attitudes toward parent involvement that was identified by this study suggests that the concept of school councils will be best implemented in urban schools. Without attention to development of administrators' skills in working with such

councils, this division of success between rural and urban school councils may serve to exaggerate existing differences in attitudes toward parent involvement in schools.

Implications for Parent Involvement

This study suggests that parents in small rural schools in this study are less supportive of both E.C.S. and school because communication patterns from school to home and from home to school are inadequately developed and inappropriately used. Teachers contacted parents most often about problems. Teachers contacted a minority of parents. Parents did not have opportunities to provide input. Less positive parent attitudes developed in rural E.C.S. programs appear to carry over into less positive parent attitudes toward school.

If parent involvement is to be implemented successfully in E.C.S. and in schools, it appears that teachers and administrators must develop new communication patterns with parents. They need to contact the majority of parents about issues other than student problems. They need to establish

methods for parents to have input to decisions and plans.

Parents whose youngest children are enrolled in higher grades appear to be more willing to be involved than parents whose youngest children are enrolled in lower grades. This may be because the existing E.C.S. model of parent involvement is resulting in parents being "burnt out" or "turned off". The roles that parents are fulfilling in E.C.S. do not appear to be consistent with parent desires. Before opportunities for parent involvement is extended in schools, the effects of the E.C.S. model of parent involvement need to be examined. If the model is sound but its implementation has not been successful, then its emphasis upon decision-making roles for parents may be appropriate for use in schools, given more effective or appropriate implementation strategies. However, if that model is not appropriate for the type of parent involvement desired by schools and parents, then it is necessary to consider alternatives that are more

effective but that also consider the residual effect of parents' experiences in E.C.S.

It may also be that schools are not involving parents whose youngest children are enrolled in higher grades. It may be that these parents have more time available for parent involvement than schools are using for involvement by these parents. It may also be that these parents desire increased involvement because they sense that their children are growing up quickly and their influence as parents upon their children is waning. In this scenario, school administrators and teachers have an opportunity to create positive opportunities for parent education and involvement that are of benefit to the general student body and the school as a whole. These parents may have a broader view of the school, given their years of experience with it. Decision-making and input roles may be more appropriate for these parents than for parents with more limited experience with the school.

Implications for E.C.S.

This study identifies several implications for Alberta's E.C.S. philosophy and model of parent involvement. E.C.S. posits as essential a decision-making emphasis for parent involvement. This role is described as most suitable and most supportive for early childhood education, and therefore essential for all parents and all programs. E.C.S. can be offered by school jurisdictions or by private operators, in rural centres and urban settings, but always this model of parent involvement is required.

Parents in this study do not support the decision-making model. They prefer to be involved with their children in the classroom. The E.C.S. model may be correct in its emphasis upon program design, implementation and evaluation as the arena for parent decision-making, but the parents in this appear to be saying that the decision-making in which they are engaged is not viewed as being of value to the classroom. That this feeling is most evident in small rural

schools where a larger percentage of parents have served on the E.C.S. executive, and presumably have had greater opportunities to engage in decision-making activities, suggests that present E.C.S. organization is not providing parents with opportunities to satisfy their desire to affect the educational program.

Parents in this study reported that their most common involvement activity in E.C.S. was attending meetings. This activity is consistent with the decision-making emphasis of E.C.S. However, those same parents do not support the decision-making model, which raises questions about the kinds of decisions, if any, parents are asked to make at those meetings.

In rural schools, administrators preferred that parents were not engaged in decision-making. In these schools, teachers and administrators were not as positive in their attitudes toward parent involvement as were urban administrators and teachers. It may be that in rural schools parents are not permitted input to issues of program design and implementation. Administrators in

rural schools preferred parents to be classroom volunteers. This is consistent with parent preferences, but is not consistent with the E.C.S. philosophy that parents do not just assist with implementation, but are to be engaged in decisions about how best to proceed with implementation of the classroom program.

It may be that rural school teachers and administrators do not subscribe to the E.C.S. philosophy. Inservice and further education may be required for teachers and administrators if rural programs are to successfully implement the E.C.S. model of parent involvement. It may also be that the E.C.S. model is appropriate only to urban E.C.S. programs and does not suit the realities of rural schools.

This study identified differences between small rural schools and large urban schools. It did not identify differences based upon private versus public E.C.S. operation. Large urban schools reflected positive parent, teacher and administrator attitudes toward parent involvement, toward E.C.S., and toward school regardless of

public or private E.C.S. operation. Rural schools were similarly less positive, regardless of their E.C.S. operation. If the E.C.S. model is not effective in the rural schools in this study, the fault does not appear to depend upon the model of E.C.S. organization being used.

Implications for Further Study

The apparent differences between the large urban schools and small rural schools in this study need further study. The urban schools in this study are not "large" when compared to schools elsewhere in Alberta. Do similar patterns exist in even larger urban schools? Do large rural schools share the same characteristics as small rural schools, or are they more like large urban schools? Is there an enrolment correlation point at which attitudes toward parent involvement change, regardless or rural or urban status?

The schools included in this study share a characteristic which was not considered in the study as it came to light during discussions about the results of the study. Historically, Alberta

has experienced a shortage of teachers trained in early childhood education. As a result, small E.C.S. programs in Alberta have had difficulty attracting qualified early childhood teachers. To enable these small programs to be operated, Alberta Education has approved the use of non-certificated individuals, ideally possessing some training appropriate to early childhood education and E.C.S., as E.C.S. instructors. These instructors are to be supervised by certificated teachers with appropriate early childhood training.

Both of the small rural schools included in this study have used non-certificated instructors in their E.C.S. programs. Both large urban schools in this study have always used certificated early childhood teachers in their E.C.S. programs. The effectiveness of the urban schools in achieving the objectives of parent involvement may be a product of professional expertise that is lacking in the rural schools. The negative attitudes of rural school administrators and teachers may be products of

negative experiences with non-certificated instructors' attempts at implementing the objectives of the E.C.S. model of parent involvement.

Further study of the correlation between attitudes toward parent involvement and the incidence of the use of non-certificated instructors in E.C.S. programs is required. Some small rural E.C.S. programs do employ certificated early childhood education specialists. Do these small rural centres provide the same results obtained in this study?

The apparent differences in attitudes toward parent involvement held by rural school administrators and teachers compared to urban teachers and administrators may be due to economic and geographic factors not considered by this study. Small rural schools may have difficulty attracting staff as qualified and experienced as are employed in large urban schools. Administrators in larger schools may have skills that differ from their counterparts in smaller schools. There may be an educational differential

among administrators. For example, administrators in urban schools may be more likely to have completed advanced studies in educational administration than have administrators in rural schools. Each of these possibilities is worthy of further study.

The samples of constituency respondents included in this study is quite small. Replication of the study with more jurisdictions and more schools is needed to determine if the conclusions of this study are reflective of provincial trends.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What type of program is your local ECS program? (Check one)

_____ Private (operated by a private society - please specify)

_____)

_____ Public (operated by a school district - please specify

_____

_____ Other (please specify: _____)

2. What is your position within your jurisdiction? (Check)

_____ Superintendent

_____ Deputy or Assistant Superintendent

_____ Principal or Vice Principal

_____ Other (please specify) _____

3. a) Should parents be able to ask about any aspect of how the schools is being run?

Yes _____

No _____

Please explain:

_____

_____

b) Whom should they be able to ask? (Check all that apply)

_____ Teacher

_____ Principal

_____ Superintendent

_____ School Board

_____ Department of Education Officials

_____ Premier

4. This question makes a number of statements about parents, teachers and schools. Please respond to each statement on both sides by circling the number which best describes your opinion.

How true is this at your E.C.S?	How true is this in school
1. Never true	1. Never true
2. Rarely true	2. Rarely true
3. Sometimes true	3. Sometimes true
4. Often true	4. Often true
5. Always true	5. Always true

EXAMPLE:

1	2	3	(4)	5	Attendance is stressed by teachers	1	2	3	4	(5)
SCHOOL								ECS		
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers inform parents about what their children will be doing	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents help their children at home with school	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5	The school shares its plans and/or problems with parents and asks for their ideas	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents have input to the way the classroomis operated.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents are encouraged to share their skills at school	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers enjoy having parents help in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents can ask about any aspect on how classroom and school is being run	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents feel comfortable in the school and classroom	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents help in the school in other ways than with school work (eg. library, secretarial)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Should parents be able to ask about what their children are being taught?
Yes _____

No _____

Please explain:
_____

_____

6. What kinds of activities should parents be involved with in elementary school? (Check all that apply)

_____ To help individual students who are having difficulty

_____ To help in their child's classroom

_____ To work in the office or library

_____ To help plan field trips and learning activities for their child

_____ To attend a meting about problems the school is facing with some student behaviors

_____ To help other parents who are having difficulty with their children

_____ To attend a school board meeting about new playground equipment

_____ To help with special fund-raising plans for school equipment and library books

_____ To prepare and duplicate materials for teachers

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

7. a) If a parent felt that their child needed a different teacher at school, would you try to have the change made?

Yes _____

No _____

b) If you said yes, what do you think the chance would be to have the change made?

_____ Very good

_____ Average

_____ Very little

Please explain:

_____

8. In which way do you believe parents should be contacted? (Please check all that apply)

BY TEACHERS		BY PRINCIPAL/ VICE PRINCIPAL
_____	Report card	_____
_____	Written note	_____
_____	Telephone call	_____
_____	Parent meetings to discuss the educational program	_____
_____	Personal visit to home	_____
_____	Invitation to observe in the classroom	_____
_____	Scheduled parent teacher interviews	_____
_____	Informal talks when dropping off or picking up child	_____

_____ Other (Please specify) _____

9. Why should schools and school systems contact parents?(Please check all that apply)

_____ To inform them about school events or activities

_____ To inform them about a learning problem their child is having

_____ To share good news about their child

_____ To ask for help with school activities

_____ To report a behaviour or attendance problem

_____ To ask them for ideas about a school policy or problem

_____ Have not contacted parents yet this year

_____ Other (please specify)

10. Why do you think that some parents do not want to get involved in their child's school?

Please explain:

_____

_____

Please provide any additional comments on parent involvement in elementary education or about any part of this questionnaire.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What type of program is your local ECS program? (Check one)
   _____ Private (operated by a private society - please specify)
   _____)

   _____ Public (operated by a school district - please specify)

   _____

   _____ Other (please specify _____)

2. At what grade level is your present teaching assignment?

   _____

3. a) Should parents be able to ask about any aspect of how the schools is being run?

   Yes _____

   No _____

   Please explain:

   _____

   _____

   b) Whom should they be able to ask? (Check all that apply)

   _____ Teacher

   _____ Principal

   _____ Superintendent

   _____ School Board

   _____ Department of Education Officials

   _____ Premier

4. This question makes a number of statements about parents, teachers and schools. Please respond to each statement on both sides by circling the number which best describes your opinion.

How true is this at your school

1. Never true
2. Rarely true
3. Sometimes true
4. Often true
5. Always true

How true is this inE.C.S?

1. Never true
2. Rarely true
3. Sometimes true
4. Often true
5. Always true

EXAMPLE:

1 2 3 4 (5) Attendance is stressed by teachers. 1 2 3 (4) 5

SCHOOL		ECS
1 2 3 4 5	Teachers inform parents about what their children will be doing	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Parents help their children at home with school	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The school shares its plans and/or problems with parents and asks for their ideas	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Parents have input to the way the classroomis operated.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Parents are encouraged to share their skills at school	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Teachers enjoy having parents help in the classroom	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis	1 2 3 4 5

1	2	3	4	5	Parents can ask about any aspect on how classroom and school is being run	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents feel comfortable in the school and classroom	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents help in the school in other ways than with school work (eg. library, secretarial)	1	2	3	4	5

5. Should parents be able to ask about what their children are being taught?
   Yes _____

   No _____

   Please explain:
   _____

   _____

6. What kinds of activities should parents be involved with in elementary school? (Check all that apply)

   _____ To help individual students who are having difficulty

   _____ To help in their child's classroom

   _____ To work in the office or library

   _____ To help plan field trips and learning activities for their child

   _____ To attend a meting about problems the school is facing with some student behaviors

   _____ To help other parents who are having difficulty with their children

   _____ To attend a school board meeting about new playground equipment

   _____ To help with special fund-raising plans for school equipment and library books

_____ To prepare and duplicate materials for teachers

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

7. a) If a parent felt that their child needed a different teacher at school, would you try to have the change made?

Yes _____

No _____

b) If you said yes, what do you think the chance would be to have the change made?

_____ Very good

_____ Average

_____ Very little

Please explain: _____

_____

8. During the past year, have you contacted parents in any of these ways?

_____ Report card

_____ Written note

_____ Telephone call

_____ Personal visit by the teacher to your home

_____ Invitation to observe in the classroom

_____ Scheduled parent-teacher interviews

_____ Informal talks when dropping off or picking up child

_____ Other (please specify) _____

9. During the past year, why did you contact parents? (Please check all that apply)

_____ To inform them about school events or activities

_____ To inform them about a learning problem their child is having

_____ To share good news about their child

_____ To ask for help with school activities

_____ To report a behaviour or attendance problem

_____ To ask them for ideas about a school policy or problem

_____ Have not contacted parents yet this year

_____ Other (please specify)

10. Why do you think that some parents do not want to get involved in their child's school?

Please explain: _____

_____

Please provide any additional comments on parent involvement in elementary education or about any part of this questionnaire.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did you enrol our child in an Early Childhood Services (E.C.S) program?

   Yes _____ No _____ (Please go to question 4)

2. In what type of program was your child enrolled? (check one)

   _____ Private (operated by a private society)
   please specify _____

   _____ Public (operated by a School District)
   please specify _____

   _____Other (please specify):_____)

3. a) Did you hold an executive position in your child's E.C.S. Local Advisory Committee?
   Yes _____ No _____

   b) If yes, what position did you hold? _____

   _____

4. What grade is your child now attending? _____

5. a) Should parents be able to ask about any aspect of how the school is being run?

Yes _____

No _____
Please explain
_____

_____

b) Who should you be able to ask? (Check all that apply)

_____ Teacher

_____ Principal

_____ Superintendent

_____ School Board

_____ Department of Education

_____ Premier

6. Should parents be able to ask about what their children are being taught?

Yes _____ No _____

Please explain:

_____

_____

7. a) If you felt that your child needed a different teacher at school, would you try to have the change made?

Yes _____ No _____

8. Which of the following BEST describes where you live?

_____ On a farm _____ In a town

_____ In a trailer court _____ On an acreage

_____ Other (please explain) _____

9. If your child's school asked for your involvement as a parent, what kinds of activities would you like to be involved with? (Check all that apply)

_____ To help individual students who are having difficulty

_____ To help in your child's classroom

_____ To work in the office or library

_____ To help plan field trips and learning activities for your child

_____ To attend a meting about problems the school is facing with some student behaviors

_____ To help other parents who are having difficulty with their children

_____ To attend a school board meeting about new playground equipment

_____ To help with special fund-raising plans for school equipment and library books

_____ To prepare and duplicate materials for teachers

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

_____

10. During the past year, have your heard from your child's school in any of these ways?

_____ Report card

_____ Written note

_____ Telephone call

_____ Personal visit by the teacher to your home

_____ Invitation to observe in the classroom

_____ Scheduled parent-teacher interviews

_____ Informal talks when dropping off or picking up child

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

11. During the past year, why did your child's school contact you? (Please check all that apply)

_____ To inform you about school events or activities

_____ To inform you about a learning problem your child is having

_____ To share good news about your child

_____ To ask for help with school activities

_____ To report a behaviour or attendance problem

_____ To ask you for ideas about a school policy or problem

_____ They have not contacted me yet

_____ Other (please specify)

12. Why do you think that some parents do not want to get involved in their child's school?
Please explain _____

_____

13. ANSWER ONLY IF YOUR CHILD ATTENDED AN E.C.S. PROGRAM:

How often were your involved in each of the following ways during your child's year in E.C.S.?

	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	THREE OR FOUR TIMES	MORE THAN FIVE TIMES
a. Helping teach children in the classroom				
b. Helping handicapped children in the classroom				
c. Attending meetings				
d. Arranging field trips				
e. Calling other parents with messages				
f. Helping prepare news-letters and other letters home				
g. Reading to children				
h. Helping prepare material for classroom activities				
i. Assisting on field trips				
j. Supervising children during lunch hours or recess				
k. Fund raising				

	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	THREE OR FOUR TIMES	MORE THAN FIVE TIMES
1. Arranging special programs for parents				

Other (Please specify)

---

14. ANSWER ONLY IF YOUR CHILD ATTENDED AN E.C.S. PROGRAM:

This question makes a number of statements about parents, teachers and schools. Please respond to each statement on both sides by circling the number which best describes your opinion.

How true is this at your **school**	How true is this in **E.C.S.**
1. Never true	1. Never true
2. Rarely true	2. Rarely true
3. Sometimes true	3. Sometimes true
4. Often true	4. Often true
5. Always true	5. Always true

EXAMPLE:

1 2 3 (4) 5 Attendance is stressed by teachers. 1 2 3 4 (5)

SCHOOL		ECS
1 2 3 4 5	Teachers inform parents about what their children will be doing	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Parents help their children at home with school	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The school offers special parenting programs useful and of interest to parents	1 2 3 4 5

1. Never true 2. Rarely true 3. Sometimes true 4. Often true 5. Always true	1. Never true 2. Rarely true 3. Sometimes true 4. Often true 5. Always true

EXAMPLE:

1 2 3 (4) 5 Attendance is stressed by teachers. 1 2 3 4 (5)

SCHOOL						ECS				
1	2	3	4	5	The school shares its plans and/or problems with parents and asks for their ideas	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents have input to the way the classroomis operated.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents are encouraged to share their skills at school	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers enjoy having parents help in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	The school keeps parents informed on a regular basis	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents can ask about any aspect on how classroom and school is being run	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents feel comfortable in the school and classroom	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Parents help in the school in other ways than with school work (eg. library, secretarial)	1	2	3	4	5

Please provide any additional comments on parent involvement in elementary education or about any part of the questionnaire.

Thank you for giving the time and effort to complete this questionnaire.

Your assistance and comments are important.

VITA

Surname: Lawrence Given Names: Gerald Carman

Place of Birth:Edmonton Date of Birth:06/10/48

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Enterring and Leaving:

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, EDMONTON 1966 TO 1970

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, B.C. 1988 TO 1990

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A. 1969 University of Alberta, Edmonton

Honors and Awards:

Publications:

_____

_____

_____

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Parent Involvement in Elementary Education

Author [redacted]

GERALD CARMAN LAWRENCE

August 10, 1990