

# Parent participation

Task force research stressed the importance of parent participation, especially at the preschool level. However, the task force held the view that preschools should be a matter of local option, with schools playing a supportive role while encouraging other public or private agencies to provide preschool programs. While available research did not discuss the effects upon achievement of participation by parents in secondary schools, task force members felt that parent participation should be encouraged both in the classroom and through better communication through meetings and use of newsletters and other media. Specific effective schooling practices related to parent participation include the following:

1. The school district has an organized program for communicating with parents (on a regular basis), information which will assist parents in understanding the goals of the school and specific instructional practices related to goal attainment. Such information services may take several forms, depending on local circumstances, including:

a. Information flyers and newsletters. In some locations, printed matter may be provided in English only; in other locations it will be appropriate to have the material presented in both English and another language.

b. Regularly scheduled meetings of parents such as Parent-Teacher Association meetings, School Advisory Committee meetings, or general parent-community meetings. If parents have a primary language other than English, then an interpreter should be present.

c. Scheduled parent-teacher conferences with a system developed for grades K-12 to meet local circumstances and containing strategies appropriate to differing grade levels, and with the further provision that the system for parent-teacher conferences not interfere with the regular 180 days of instruction for each student.

2. Where preschool programs are provided, cognitive development is to be emphasized as opposed to a play-oriented program. Such a program would have a strong component of parent participation in the classroom, and a component to train parents to reinforce school learnings of children at home.

3. The school actively seeks to involve parents in classrooms to assist individual students. In some locales parent volunteers may be recruited; in other situations pay may be more appropriate to local custom.

4. The school makes extensive use of parents as resource persons in the classroom.

5. The school staff assigns homework on a regular basis as a means of extending instruction and as a means of providing parents an opportunity to tutor or assist children at home, when parents are monolingual in the same language as is used for instruction (or bilingual with command of the language used for instruction).

a. The amount and frequency of homework is related to the subject, age, and grade of the child.

b. Provision is made to acquaint parents with the subject matter being studied and with effective means of assisting their children with homework.

6. The school makes provision of space for children to work on homework after school hours in locations where either study space is limited at home or parents are monolingual in a language other than that used for instruction. In this instance, parents who have fluency in the language of instruction should be recruited to assist students. Parents who do not have facility with the language of instruction could also be used to provide general supervision.

7. In settings where students are bussed, schedules are arranged to accommodate students using school facilities for after-school study and other activities.