Excerpt From

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An introductory packet on

Parent and Home Involvement in Schools

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Intervening to Enhance Home Involvement in Schooling

Details types of home involvement in schooling and ways to effectively implement this involvement for populations that need systematic outreach and ongoing encouragement

By Howard S. Adelman

Home involvement in schools is a prominent item on the education reform agenda in the 1990s. Such involvement is especially important when students have learning and behavior problems. Of course, home involvement is not a new concern. As Davies (1987) has reminded us, the "questions and conflict about parent and community relationships to schools began in this country when schools began" (p. 147).

Review of the literature indicates widespread endorsement of home involvement, (Besides the citations provided throughout this article, a survey of other work is appended in the section entitled "Bibliography."I As Epstein (19871 noted, "research findings accumulated over two decades ... show that ... parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account (pp. 119-120).

In special education, long-standing views about the importance of home involvement have been translated into law-most recently in the family focus prescribed in P.L. 99-457. Legislated mandates, however, are no guarantee of effective practice (Bailey, Buysse, Edmondson, & Smith, 1992; Dunst, Johanson, Trivette, & Hamby, 1991; Harry, 1992).

Some families are quite receptive to efforts to involve them in schools and schooling. The focus of the following discussion is not on this relatively small group. Our interest is in populations where systematic outreach and ongoing encouragement are essential to establishing and maintaining involvement. Efforts to involve such populations raise all the issues and problems associated with intervening with reluctant individuals.

A review of the home involvement literature provides a foundation for improving intervention. In exploring central concepts, concerns, and strategies the present article builds on this literature and on intervention research, in which I am involved (Adelman & Taylor, 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993). Specifically discussed are (a) types of home involvement, (b) barriers to involvement, (c) intervention agendas, and (d) a framework outlining sequential intervention phases and tasks (See Note).

Types of Involvement

Various categorizations of home involvement in schooling have been formulated (Anderson, 1983; Conoley, 1987; Davies, 1987; Epstein, 1987, 1988; Jackson & Cooper, 1989; Loven, 19781. For example, Epstein (19881 described five types of parent-school involvement:

1. *Basic obligations of parents to children and school* (e.g., providing food, clothing, shelter; assuring health and safety; providing childrearing and home training; providing school supplies and a place for doing schoolwork; building positive home conditions for learning);

2. *Basic obligations of school to children and family* (e.g., using a variety of communication methods to inform parents about school schedules, events, policies, children's

grades, test scores, and daily performance; treating children justly and- effectively including accounting for differences);

3. Parent involvement at school (e.g., assisting teachers and students with lessons and class trips; assisting administrators, teachers, and staff in cafeteria, library, and computer lab; assisting organized parent groups in fundraising, community relations, political awareness, and program development; attending student assemblies and sports events; attending workshops, discussion groups, and training sessions);

4. Parent involvement in *student* learning at *home (e*.g., contributing to development of child's social and personal skills, basic academic skills, and advanced skills by aiding with schoolwork; providing enrichment opportunities; and monitoring progress and problems); and

5. Parent involvement in governance and advocacy (e.g., participating in decision-making groups; advocating for improved schooling).

Davies (1987) has identified four types of parent-school involvement and extends the nature and scope of home involvement as follows:

1. Coproduction or *partnership (in*dividual and collective activities in school or at home that contribute to school efforts to teach more effectively, such as tutoring programs, homework hotlines, suggestions as to how to reinforce classroom efforts, parent education about what the school *is* trying to do, home visitor programs, and parent volunteers to assist teachers);

2. Decision making (ranging from parent participation in decisions about the child to involvement in system planning, such as setting policies, assessing schools, and deciding about budgeting, curriculum, and personnel);

3. Citizen advocacy (e.g., case, class, political advocacy; citizen organizations to build public support for schools);

4. Parent *choice (e*.g., involvement in selecting the child's school).

Jackson and Cooper (1989) also extended the conceptualization of types of involvement by adding two categories to Epstein's five. The sixth type, parent decision making (consumer activities), expands Davies' category of "parent choice" to a broader consumer role (e.g., parent awareness of the marketplace of available educational choices to make the best feasible arrangements to ensure their child's success). Their seventh category, *parent community networks,* attempts to cover a variety of involvements related to using "the unique culture of the local parent community to help all parties concerned" (p. 264). In this category, they include schools as places for parents to congregate and solve problems, activities that improve parents' skills, schooling that builds on parents' cultural traditions, and networking relevant to parent agendas.

Existing categorizations provide a starting point for labeling clusters of activity, and they help highlight differences in the nature of home involvement. Because my colleagues and I approach intervention from a transactional perspective (see Adelman & Taylor, 1993), we think it important to differentiate types of home involvement in terms of whether the focus is on improving the functioning of individuals (student, parent-care taker), the system (classroom, school, district), or both. And, with respect to individual functioning, it seems worth distinguishing home involvement designed mainly to facilitate schooling from involvement intended primarily to help parents-caretakers per se. To these ends, we use a six-category continuum (see Figure 1). At one end, the focus is on using home involvement to improve individual functioning of the student, the caretaker, or both; at the

Improve individual functioning ù Improve system functioning	meeting basic obligations to the student/ helping caretakers meet their own basic needs
	communicating about matters essential to the student
	making essential decisions about the student
	supporting the student's *basic* learning and development at home
	solving problems and providing support at home and at school related to the student's special needs
	working for a classroom's/school's improvement
	working for improvement of all schools

Figure **1.** Establishment of specific ways to involve the home.

other end, the aim is to use involvement to improve the system.

Even though the categories are not discrete, the various schemes illustrated in Figure I are an obvious aid in (a) delineating the range of ways homes can be involved and (b) analyzing key differences in the nature of the activity. Thus, these schemes are useful for both research and practice. It is important, however, to remember that categorization of types does not adequately highlight other significant differences. For example, parents who help with homework or who participate in decision making differ in the degree and quality of their involvement; ensuing benefits and costs also differ. In thinking about home involvement, therefore, at least four other dimensions are relevant, namely, frequency, level, quality, and impact (positive and negative) of involvement.

Barriers to Involvement

In addition to addressing types of involvement, interventions must deal with barriers to involvement. Research on barriers has explored a narrowly conceived set of variables and, in doing so, has focused on the participation of special subgroups such as parents from lower socioeconomic and ethnic minority backgrounds and parents of special education students. The result is that a variety of familial, cultural, racial, job, social class, communication, and school personnel attitude factors have been implicated (e.g., Becker & Epstein, 1982; Chavkin & Williams, 1989, Comer, 1988; Davies, 1988; Epstein, 1986, 1987; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Klimes-Dougan, Lopez, Adelman, Nelson, 1992; Lopez, 1992; Lynch Stein, 1987; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; Pennekamp & Freeman, 1988; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal; 1990; Tangri & Leitch, 19821. However, because the studies are correlational, causal relationships have not been established. Furthermore, within-group variations are rarely explored.

In an effort to broaden the focus, intervention specialists can categorize barriers with respect to type and form. That is, these barriers can be grouped into three types: institutional, personal, and impersonal. In addition, their form can be characterized in terms of negative attitudes, lack of mechanism s/skills, Or practical deterrents-including lack of resources. Figure 2 underscores the interacting nature of types and forms of barriers.

A few words will help clarify the categories. Institutional barriers stem from deficiencies related to resource availability (money, space, time) and administrative use of what is available. Deficient use of resources includes failure to establish and

		FORMS OF BARRIERS		
		Negative Attitudes	Lack of Mechanisms/Skills	Practical Deterrents
TYPES OF BARRIERS	Institutional	e.g., school administration is hostile toward increasing home involvement	e.e., insufficient staff assigned to planning and implementing ways to enhance involvement; no more than a token effort to accommodate different languages	e.g.,low priority given to home involvement in allocating resources such a space, time, and money
	Impersonal	e.g., home involvement suffers from benign neglect	e.g., rapid influx of immigrant families overwhelms school's ability to communicate and provide relevant home involvement activities	e.g., schools lack resources; majority in home have problems related to work schedules, childcare, transportation
	Personal	e.g., Specific teachers and parents feel home involvement is not worth the effort or feel threatened by such involvement	e.g., specific teachers and parents lack relevant languages and interpersonal skills	e.g.,specific teachers and parents are too busy or lack resources

Figure 2. General types and forms of barriers to home involvement

maintain formal home involvement mechanisms and related skills. It also encompasses general lack of interest or hostile attitudes toward home involvement among school staff, the administration, or the community. Instances of deficient use of resources occur when there is no policy commitment to facilitating home involvement, when inadequate provisions are made for interacting with parents who don't speak English, or when no resources are devoted to upgrading the skills of staff with respect to involving parents.

Similar barriers occur on a more personal level. Specific school personnel or parents may lack requisite skills or find participation uncomfortable because it demands their time and other resources. others may lack interest or feel hostile toward home involvement. For instance, any given teacher or parent may feel it is too much of an added burden to meet to discuss student problems. Others may feel threatened because they think they can't make the necessary interpersonal connections due to racial, cultural, and/or language differences. Still others do not perceive available activities as worth their time and effort.

Impersonal barriers to home and staff participation are commonplace and rather obvious. For example, there can be practical problems related to work schedules, transportation, and childcare. There can also be skill deficiencies related to cultural differences and levels of literacy. There may be lack of interest due to insufficient information about the importance of home involvement.

Overcoming barriers, of course, is a primary intervention concern. And, when there are inadequate finances to underwrite ways to overcome barriers, finding the resources becomes the first barrier that must be overcome.

Whose Interests Are to Be Served? Agendas for Involving the Home

As the preceding discussion highlights, understanding types of and barriers to involvement provides a help" foundation for planning and implementing ways to enhance that involvement. Another essential perspective comes from awareness of contrasting and often conflicting intervention agendas.

Different rationales underlie interventions for involving the home. Most reflect society's agendas, and these often come into conflict with agendas aimed at helping those with special needs. At the root of the matter are age old social and political concerns related to inevitable conflicts between individual and societal interests.

All intentional interventions are rationally based. That is, underlying such activity there is a rationale whether or not it is explicitly stated. A rationale consists of views derived from philosophical, theoretical, empirical, and legal sources. Or, stated more boldly, underlying rationales consist of biases that guide and shape intervention aims and practices. Because of potential conflicts of interest, it is essential that the biases incorporated into an intervention rationale be clearly articulated and debated.

The problem of conflicting interests is reflected in the extensive concern raised about society's ability to exercise control through agendas for psychological and educational interventions (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 1988; Coles, 1978; Feinberg, 1973; Garbarino, Gaboury, Long, Grandjean, & Asp, 1982; Hobbs, 1975; Mnookin, 1985; Robinson, 1974). At one extreme, it is argued that there are times when society must put its needs ahead of individual citizens' rights by pursuing policies and practices for maintaining itself. This is seen, for example, whenever parents are compelled by school personnel to talk about facets of their family life or to participate in some aspect of their child's schooling. At the other extreme, it is argued that society should Dever jeopardize individuals' rights (e.g., invade privacy, use coercive procedures). For many persons, however, neither extreme is acceptable, especially given how they define what is in the best interests of individuals in the society.

Without agreeing or disagreeing with either extreme, the importance of the debate can be appreciated. Specifically, it serves to heighten awareness about three basic problems; (a) No society is devoid of coercion in dealing with its members (e.g., no right or liberty is absolute), and coercion is especially likely when interventions are justified as serving a minor's best interests; (b) interventions are used to serve the vested interests of subgroups in a society at the expense of other subgroups (e.g., to place extra burdens on minorities, the poor, women, and legal minors and to deprive them of freedoms and rights); and (c) informed consent and due process of law are key to protecting individuals when there are conflicting interests (e.g., about whom or what should be blamed for a problem and be expected to carry the brunt of corrective measures). Awareness of these problems is essential to protect individuals and subgroups from abuse by those with power to exercise direct or indirect control over them.

Given the preceding context, different intentions underlying intervention for home involvement in schools and schooling are worth highlighting. Four broad agendas are contrasted here, namely, socialization, economic, political, and helping agendas.

A socialization agenda is seen in messages sent home and in school-based parent training. These are meant to influence parent- caretaker attitudes toward schooling and to socialize parenting practices in ways designed specifically to facilitate schooling. An economic agenda is intended to aid schooling by involving the home as a supplementary resource to compensate for budget limitations. A political agenda focuses on the role the home plays in making decisions about schools and schooling. A helping agenda establishes programs to aid individuals in pursuing their own needs. Clearly, these four agendas are not mutually exclusive, as will be evident in the following brief discussion of each.

Socialization Agenda

Schools are societal institutions with prime responsibilities for socializing the young, ensuring the society's economic survival through provision of an adequately equipped work force, and preserving the political system. In pursuing society's interest in socializing children, schools try to socialize parents, for instance, by influencing parent attitudes and parenting practices. This is seen in the widespread pressure exerted on parents to meet "basic obligations" and in the emphasis on parent "training."

Often, a school's agenda to socialize parents is quite compatible with the interests of parents and their children. For instance, schools and those at home want to minimize childrens' antisocial behavior and equip them with skills for the future. However, there are times when the school's socialization agenda comes into conflict with the home's agenda with respect to meeting other basic obligations and needs, such as the obligation to avoid causing or exacerbating a problem. The sidebar contains a negative example from the author's work, which is offered to underscore the complexity of this concern (the names have been changed).

The case in the sidebar raises many issues. for example, involvement of the home in cases such as Jos6's usually is justified by the school as "in the best interests of the student and the others in the class." However, clearly there are different ways to understand the causes of and appropriate responses to Jose’s misbehavior. By way of contrast, another analysis might suggest that the problem lies in ill-conceived instructional practices and, therefore, might prescribe changing instruction rather than strategies focused on the misbehavior per se. Even given an evident need for home involvement, the way the mother was directed to deal with her son raises concerns about whether the processes were coercive. Questions also arise about social class and race. For example, if the family had come from a middle or higher income background, would the same procedures have been used in discussing the problem, exploring alternative ways to solve it, and involving the mother in parent training? In addition, there is concern that overemphasis in parent workshops on strategies for controlling children's behavior leads participants such as Jose’s mother to pursue practices that often do not address children's needs and may seriously exacerbate problems.

Conflict Between School and Home Agendas

Jose's family had come to the United States 4 years ago. His father worked as a gardener; his mother worked in the garment district. Neither parent was fluent in English; mother less so than father.

Jose's parents were called to school because of his misbehavior in the classroom. The teacher (who did not speak Spanish) informed them that she was having to use a range of behavioral management strategies to control Jose. However, for the strategies to really work, she said it also was important for the parents to use the some procedures at home. To learn these "parenting skills," the parents both were to attend one of the 6-week evening workshops the school was starting. They were assured that the workshop was free, was available in English or Spanish, and that there would be childcare at the school if they needed it.

After meeting with the teacher, Jose's father, who had reluctantly come to the conference, told his wife she should attend the workshop-but he would not. She understood that he saw it as her role-not his-but she was frightened; they fought about it. They had been fighting about a lot of things recently. In the end, she went, but her resentment toward her husband grew with every evening she had to attend the training sessions.

Over the next few months, the mother attempted to apply what she was told to do at the workshop. She withheld privileges and confined Jose to periods of time-out whenever he didn't toe the line. At the some time, she felt his conduct at home had not been and was not currently that bad-it was just the same spirited behavior his older brothers had shown at his age. Moreover, she knew he was upset by the increasingly frequent arguments she and her husband were having. She would have liked some help to know what to do about his and her own distress, but she didn't know how to get such help.

Instead of improving the situation, the control strategies seemed to make Jose more upset; he acted out more frequently and with escalating force. Soon, his mother found he would not listen to her and would run off when she tried to do what she had been told to do. She complained to her husband. He said it was her fault for pampering Jose. His solution was to beat the youngster.

To make matters worse, the teacher called to say she now felt that Jose should be taken to the doctor to determine whether he was hyperactive and in need of medication. This was too much for Jose's mother. She did not take him to the doctor, and she no longer responded to most calls and letters from the school.

Jose continued to be a problem at school and then at home, and his mother did not know what to do about it or who to turn to for help. When asked, Jose's teacher describes the parents as "hard to reach."

Economic Agenda

Home involvement is a recognized way of supplementing school resources. The home may be asked to contribute money, labor, knowledge, skills, or talent. Controversy arises about this agenda due to concerns regarding fairness, as well as in connection with professional guild complaints and public funding considerations. For example, inequities among schools may be exacerbated because some schools can draw on the assets of higher income homes. Unions representing teachers and their assistants point to excessive use of parent and other volunteers as a factor affecting job availability and wage negotiations. And, increasing reliance on ad hoc sources of public support is seen as potentially counterproductive to mobilizing citizens and policy makers to provide an appropriate base of funding for public education.

Political Agenda

Another reason for involving parents is related to the politics of school decision making. This agenda is seen in the trend toward parents assuming some form of policy-making "partnership" with the school, such as joining advisory and decision-making councils. In some cases, the intent apparently is to move parents into an equal partnership with school decision makers; in other instances, the aim appears to be one of giving the illusion that parents have a say or even demonstrating that parents are uninterested or unable to make sound policy.

The case of the Read Start program illustrates politics and policy related to home involvement. As Valentine and

Stark (1979) indicated, parent involvement policy in Head Start developed around three notions: parent education, parent participation, and parent control. "These three constructs signify different dimensions of social change: individual change and institutional, or 'systems/ change" (p. 308). Initially, the goal was to use parent involvement to produce institutional change through either parent participation or parent control. Over time, this goal was displaced by individual change: national Head Start policy guidelines [in combination with local and federal initiatives to contain militancy] helped redirect parent involvement away from political organization toward a 'safe' combination of participatory decision-making and parent education" (p. 308).

Helping Agenda

Prevailing agendas for involving the home emphasize meeting societal and school needs (Clark, 1983; Coleman, 1987; Educational Commission of the States, 1988; Epstein & Becker, 1982). It is not surprising, therefore, that little attention has been paid to schools helping parents and caretakers meet their own needs. Schools do offer some activities, such as parent support groups and classes to teach parents English as a second language, that may help parents and contribute to their well-being (e.g., by improving parenting or literacy skills). However, the rationale for expending resources on these activities usually is that they enhance parents' ability to play a greater role in improving schooling.

It seems reasonable to suggest that another reason for involving parents is to support their efforts to improve the quality of their lives. Included here is the notion of the school providing a social setting for parents and, in the process, fostering a psychological sense of community (Sarason, 1972, 1982; see also Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989). This involves creation of a setting where parents, school staff, and students want to and are able to interact with each other in mutually beneficial ways that lead to a special feeling of connection. It also encompasses finding ways to account for and celebrate cultural and individual diversity in the school community.

To these ends, ways must be found to minimize transactions that make parents feel incompetent, blamed, or coerced. Concomitantly, procedures and settings must be designed to foster informal encounters, provide information and learning opportunities, enable social interactions, facilitate access to sources of social support (including linkage to local social services), encourage participation in decision making, and so forth.

Examples abound. Parents might be encouraged to drop in, be volunteers, participate in publishing a community newsletter, organize social events such as breakfasts and potluck *dinners for* families of students and staff, plan and attend learning workshops, meet with the teacher to learn more about their child's curriculum and interests, help initiate parent support and mutual aid groups and other social networks, share their heritage and interests, check out books and attend story hours at the school's library, and go on field trips.

It should be reemphasized that the primary intent is to improve the quality of life for the participants-with any impact an schooling seen as a secondary gain. At the same time, moves toward fostering such a climate seem consistent with the effective school literature's focus on the importance of a school's climate, ethos, or culture (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Rutter, 1981).

Approaching the topic from a special education orientation, Dunst et al. (1991) provided a good example of the concern about differing agendas in involving the home. In categorizing family-oriented *intervention policies* and practices, they contrasted those that are family-centered versus those that are not. For instance, they categorized the characteristics of family oriented interventions in terms of six general emphases. Specifically, characteristics are differentiated with respect to a focus on (a) enhancing a sense of community, that is, "promoting the coming together of people around shared values and common needs in ways that create mutually beneficial interdependencies"; (b) mobilizing resources and supports, that is, "building support systems that enhance the flow of resources in ways that assist families with parenting responsibilities"; (c) sharing responsibility and collaboration, that is, "sharing ideas and skills by parents and professionals in ways that build and strengthen collaborative arrangements"; (d) protecting family integrity, that is, "respecting the family beliefs and values and protecting the family from intrusion upon its beliefs by outsiders"; (e) strengthening family functioning, that is, "promoting the capabilities and competencies of families necessary to mobilize resources and perform parenting responsibilities in ways that have empowering consequences"; and if) using proactive human service practices, that is, "adoption of consumer-driven human service-delivery models and practices that support and strengthen family functioning" (all quotes from p. 117). Based on a review of the ideas underlying existing programs, they suggested interventions can be differentiated into four general categories: (a) family centered, (b) family focused, (c) family allied, and (d) professional centered.

Given that interventions to enhance home involvement are a growth industry, the underlying rationales for such involvement warrant articulation and debate. It is hoped that the preceding discussion illustrates the need for extensive exploration of social and political ramifications and clarification of policy and intervention implications. (For related discussions, see Adelman & Taylor, 1988; Feinberg, 1973; Garbarino et al., 1982; Jackson & Cooper, 1989; Lareau, 1989; McLaughlin & Shields, 1987; Mnookin, 1985; Robinson, 1974; Seeley, 1989; Swap, 1990; Valentine & Stark, 1979; Walberg, 1984).

Intervention Phases and Tasks

Drawing on the preceding perspectives and our ongoing work, my colleagues and I are developing a framework for intervening to enhance home involvement in schools and schooling. We find it useful procedurally to think about such intervention as encompassing sets of sequential phases and tasks.

The concept of sequential phases is meant to capture the idea of starting with the best general practices and moving on to more specialized interventions as needed and as feasible. Thus, our three-phase sequence begins with a broadband focus. This involves general institutional procedures designed to recruit and facilitate participation of all who are ready, willing, and able.

Then, the focus narrows to those who need just a bit more personalized contact (e.g., personal letters, phone invitations, highlighted information, and/or contact and ongoing support from other parents) Or a few more options to make participation more attractive. After this, to the degree feasible, the focus further narrows to parents or caretakers who remain uninvolved or difficult, such as those with an obvious lack of interest or intensely negative attitudes toward the school. The suggested strategies in these cases continue to emphasize personalized contacts, with the addition of as many cost-intensive special procedures as can be afforded.

Four tasks have been conceived to capture the sequence of intervention activity, which ranges from initial institutional organization for enhancing home involvement through ongoing strategies to sustain such involvement. These tasks are conceived as organizing the institution, extending invitations, early facilitation, and maintenance. Each is highlighted below.

Institutional Organization for involvement

Currently, all school districts are committed to some form of home involvement. Unfortunately, limited finances often mean that verbal commitments are not backed up with the resources necessary to underwrite programs. Regardless of district support, if homes are to become significantly involved at a school, research and experience suggest the following: on-site decision makers must (a) be committed to involving those in the home; (b) be clear about specific intent; (c) offer a range of ways for individuals to be involved; (d) be clear about what is required in recruiting, initiating, and maintaining involvement; and (e) establish and institutionalize effective mechanisms dedicated to home involvement.

As a first step, schools must come to grips with why and how they want to enhance home involvement and the implications of doing so. For instance, it is essential to recognize that successful efforts to increase such involvement may trigger a series of changes in power relationships. If the school actually is ready to share power, a developmental process is required that fosters parent interest and the specific skills needed to assume and maintain a decision-making partnership. If those with current responsibility for school and district governance are not prepared to share their power, then they probably should not describe their intent as that of creating a home-school partnership. The term *partnership* suggests that parents will have a major role to play in decision making, and this is not likely to happen when the school's intent is mainly to have parents rubber-stamp predefined objectives and processes.

On-site decision makers probably should write out their rationale for involving the home and outline a range of initial and future participation options. Such documents would be of value not only to program developers, but also to researchers and those concerned with public policy. These statements can be especially useful if they address such basic questions as the following: Is the intent just to use parents to facilitate school objectives, or will some activities be designed primarily to benefit parents (e.g., personal interest and support groups)? How much power should be ceded to parents? For instance, is the eventual intent to involve interested parents fully in decision-making councils?

Once a rationale and outline of options are clarified, the next crucial step is to establish institutional mechanisms for carrying out plans to enhance home involvement-including ways to overcome institutional barriers. Logically, a major focus is on mechanisms to recruit ` train, and maintain a cadre of staff, and perhaps some parents, who have relevant interests and competence. Implied in all this is a lengthy commitment of significant resources.

Inviting Involvement

From the perspective of cognitive affective theories of motivation, a key intervention concern is how those in the home perceive the school (Adelman, 1992; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Three concerns of particular importance with respect to involving the home are whether the general atmosphere at the school is perceived as a welcoming one, whether the school is perceived as specifically inviting involvement, and whether specific contacts are experienced as positive.

It is not uncommon for parents to feel unwelcome at school.The prob-lem can begin with their first contact.

It apparently is a familiar experience to encounter school office staff and student assistants whose demeanor seems unfriendly. The problem may be compounded by language barriers that make communication frustrating.

Beyond contacts with office staff, many parents come to school mainly when they are called in to discuss their child's learning or behavior difficulties. It is hard for even the most determined school personnel to dispel the discomfort of parents during such discussions.

Parents who feel unwelcome or "called on the carpet" cannot be expected to view the school as an inviting setting. Schools that want to facilitate positive involvement must both counter factors that make the setting uninviting and develop ways to make it attractive to parents. We have come to think of this as the welcoming or invitation problem.

From a psychological perspective, the invitation problem is seen as requiring strategies that address the attitudes that school staff, students, and parents hold regarding home involvement. That is, in most cases, involvement probably is best facilitated when attitudes are positive rather than neutral or, worse yet, hostile. And, positive attitudes about home involvement seem most likely when those concerned perceive personal benefits as outweighing potential costs (psychological and tangible).

Addressing the invitation problem begins with efforts to ensure that most communications and interactions between school personnel and home convey a welcoming tone. It is reasonable to assume that a major way that a staff's attitude about home involvement is conveyed is through a school's formal communications with the home and the procedures used to reach out to specific individuals. In addition, informal interactions between personnel and parents can be expected to reinforce or counter the impact of formal contacts.

Based on these assumptions, a primary focus of interventions designed to address the invitation problem should be on establishing formal mechanisms that (a) convey a general sense of welcome to all parents and (b) extend a personalized invitation to those who appear to need something more. A few comments may help clarify the types of strategies that seem warranted.

General Welcoming.

Schools tend to rely heavily on formal dialogues and written statements in interacting and communicating with parents. As immigrant populations increase, such processes are adapted to account at least for different languages. For example, attempts have been made to supply office staff with resources for communicating with non-English speaking parents. Such resources might include providing welcoming messages and introductory information in various languages through (a) written materials; (b) a cadre of foreign language speakers who can be called upon when needed, such as onsite staff and students or district personnel and community volunteers reachable by phone; and (c) video and computer programs.

Efforts to account for language differences as well as differences in literacy when communicating with parents clearly are essential prerequisites to making the school inviting. At the same time, the specific information communicated needs to be expressed in ways that convey positive attitudes toward parents and toward home involvement with the school. More generally, some school staff may require specific training to appreciate the importance of positive formal and informal interactions with parents and caretakers and how to maintain those interactions.

A special welcoming problem arises around newly enrolled students and their families, especially those students who enroll during the school year. Schools need to delineate steps for greeting new families, giving them essential orientation information, and encouraging involvement in ongoing activities. Such steps might include a Welcome Packet for Newcomers and introductory conferences with the principal, the student's teacher, other staff resources, and parent representatives-with the emphases both on welcoming and involving them.

Special Invitations.

Invitations to the home come in two forms: (a) general communications such as mass distribution of flyers, newsletters, classroom announcements, and form letters, and (b) special, personalized contacts such as personal notes from the teacher, invitations a student makes and takes home, and interchanges at school, over the phone, or during a home visit. Parents who fail to respond to repeated general invitations to become involved may not appreciate what is available. Or, there may be obstacles to their involvement. Whatever the reasons, the next logical step is to extend the special invitations and increase personalized contact.

Special invitations can range from simple approaches, such as a note or a call, to cost-intensive processes, such as a home visit. These are directed at designated individuals and are intended to overcome personal attitudinal barriers; they can also be used to elicit information about persisting personal and impersonal barriers. For example, one simple approach is to send a personal request to targeted parents. The request may invite them to a specific event such as a parent-teacher conference, a school performance involving their child, a parenting workshop, or a parent support group. Or it may ask for greater involvement at home to facilitate their child's learning, such as providing enrichment opportunities or basic help with homework. If the parents still are not responsive, the next special invitation might include an RSVP and ask for an indication of any obstacles interfering with involvement.

When those at home indicate obstacles, the problem moves beyond invitations. Overcoming personal and impersonal barriers requires facilitative strategies.

Facilitating Early involvement

As with the invitation step, the sequence of intervention phases for facilitating early involvement range from general institutional mechanisms to special personalized procedures. The sequence begins with general strategies to inform, encourage, provide support for overcoming barriers, and so forth. For example, most schools recognize the need to send frequent reminders. Another fundamental reality is that working parents have relatively few hours to devote to school involvement. Labor statistics suggest that as few as 7% of school-age children live in a twoparent household where there is only one wage eamer. Thus, it is essential to accommodate a variety of parent schedules and to provide for childcare in establishing parent activities.

Beyond addressing barriers, involvement activities must be designed to account for a wide range of individual differences in interests and capabilities among those in the home and among school personnel. The diversity of knowledge, attitudes, and skills requires options for those in the home, and for school staff, that allow for participation in different ways and at different *levels* and *frequencies.* For example, it seems particularly important to legitimize initial minimal degrees of involvement for certain homes and to support frequent changes in the nature and scope of involvement. In general, to address individual differences, facilitation must (a) ensure that there are a variety of ways to participate, (b) sanction home participation in any option and to the degree feasible, (c) account for cultural and individual diversity, (d) enable participation of those with minimal skills, and (e) provide support to improve participation skills. Parents who already are involved could play a major role in all these facilitative efforts.

At this point, it seems relevant to reemphasize the importance of not thinking of all home involvement as school based. In particular, the primary involvement of parents who work all day may be in helping their child with homework. This may be an especially fruitful area in which to facilitate home-school collaboration through establishing good channels of communication and a supportive working relationship.

For many, the general strategies already described are sufficient. For some, however, additional outreach and support are necessary. In this regard, it may be best to start with individuals who seem somewhat approachable and whose obstacles are not intractable, and then to move on to others as soon as feasible.

Personalized interventions might focus, for example, on a parent's negative attitude toward participating in existing options. A significant number of parents view efforts to involve them at school as not worth the time or effort or view the school as hostile, controlling, or indifferent. Exceptional efforts may be required before an extremely negative parent will perceive the school as supportive and view involvement as personally beneficial.

In cases where a parent's negative attitude stems from skill deficits (e.g., doesn't speak English, lacks skills to help with homework), the option of a skill group is a relatively easy one to offer. The larger facilitative problem, however, is to do so in a way that minimizes stigma arid maximizes intrinsic motivation. Some reluctant parents may be reached, initially, by offering them an activity designed to give them additional personal support, such as a mutual interest group composed of parents with the same cultural background or a mutual support group (e.g., Simoni & Adelman, in press). Such groups might even meet away from the school at a time when working parents can participate. In such cases, the school's role is to help initiate the groups and provide consultation as needed.

Maintaining Involvement

Available evidence indicates that there is a significant decrease in parent involvement as students get older (Epstein, 1987; Lucas & Lusthaus, 1978). The causes of this decrease have not been established, but it has been associated with a decline in intervention efforts (Epstein, 1984). Thus, as difficult as it is to involve some homes initially, keeping them involved may be even a more difficult matter.

Maintaining involvement can be seen as a problem of sustaining and enhancing intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Extrapolating from available research on intrinsic motivation, three strategies for maintaining involvement seem basic: (a) continuing to provide and vary a range of valued ways individuals can be involved; (b) facilitating their decision making among available options-including decisions to add or move from one to another; and (c) providing continuous support for learning, growth, and success-including feedback about how involvement is personally benefitting the participant. Beyond specific strategies, however, maintaining involvement may depend on the school's commitment to creating a psychological sense of community at the school and empowering the home.

Conclusion

Figure 3 offers a graphic summary of the major points discussed above. As the figure underscores, schools determined to enhance home involvement must be clear as to their intent and the types of involvement they want to foster. Although the tasks remain constant, the breadth of intervention focus can vary over three sequential phases: (a) broadband contact s-focused on those who are receptive; (b) personalized contacts-added for those who need a little inducement; and (c) intensive special contacts-added for those who are extremely unreceptive. Then, they must establish and maintain mechanisms to carry out intervention phases and tasks in a sequential mariner. And, besides being involved in different types of home involvement, participants differ in the frequency, level, quality, and impact of their involvement.

Intervening to enhance home involvement in schools and schooling is as complex as any other psychological and educational intervention. Clearly, such activity requires considerable time, space, materials, and competence, and these ingredients are purchased with financial resources. Basic staffing must be underwritten. Additional staff may be needed; at the very least, teachers, specialists, and administrators need "released" time. Efforts to accommodate parent schedules by offering workshops and parent-teacher conferences in the evening and during weekends are likely to produce staff demands for compensatory time off or overtime pay. Furthermore, if such interventions are to be planned, implemented, and evaluated effectively, those given the responsibility will require instruction, consultation, and supervision.

The success of programs to enhance home involvement in schools and schooling is, first and foremost in the hands of policymakers. If increased home involvement in schools is to be more than another desired but unachieved aim of educational reformers, policymakers must understand the nature and scope of what is involved. A comprehensive intervention perspective makes it evident that although money alone cannot solve the problem, money is a necessary prerequisite. It is patently unfair to hold school personnel accountable for yet another major reform if they are not given the support necessary for accomplishing it. In an era when new sources of funding are unlikely, it is clear that such programs must be assigned a high priority and funds must be reallocated in keeping with the level of priority. To do less is to guarantee the status quo.

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Note

Terms such as *parent involvement* and even *family involvement* increasingly ore recognized as unduly restrictive. Given extended families and the variety of child caretakers, *home involvement* is seen as a more inclusive term.

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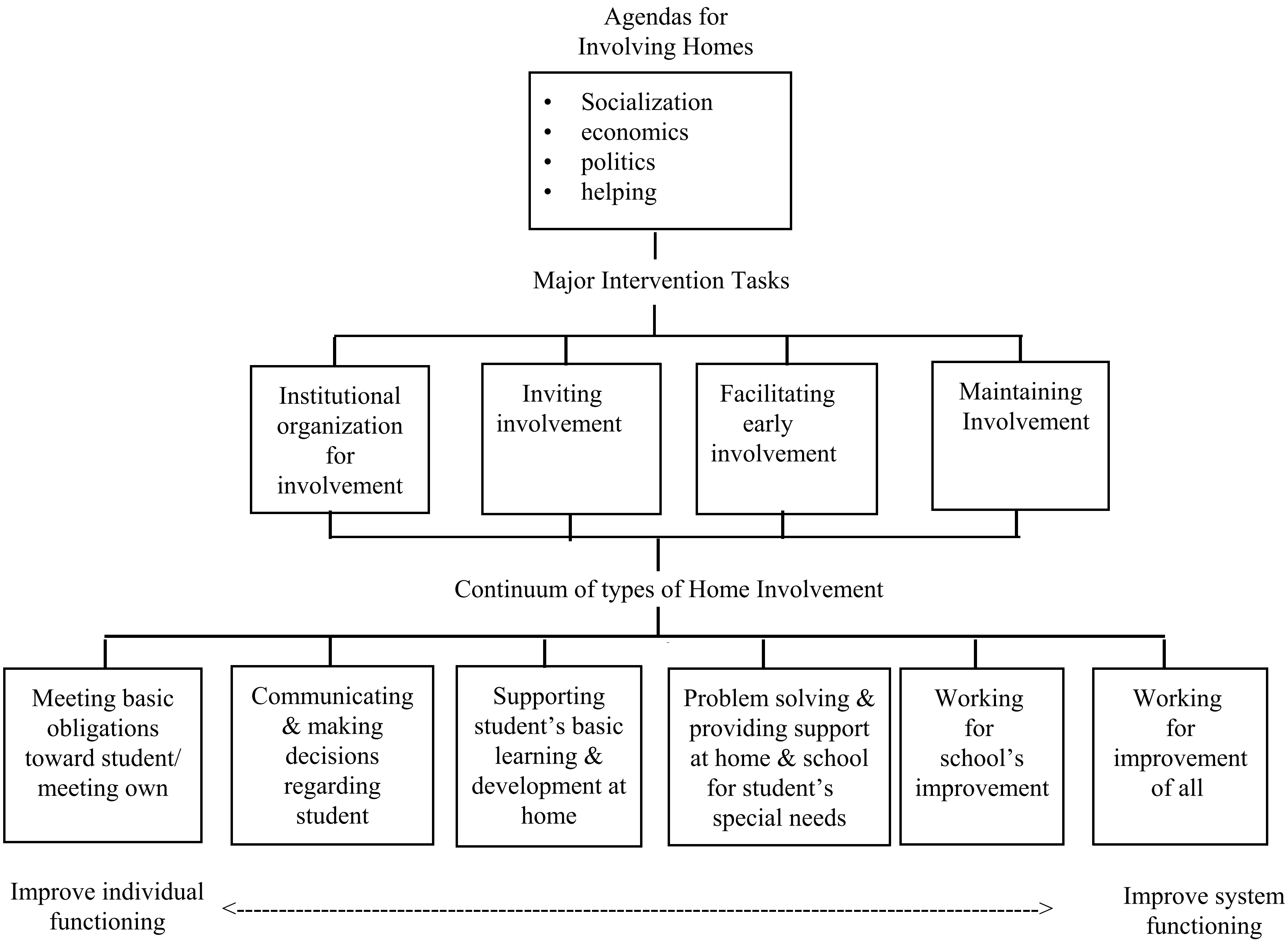
Agendas for Involving Homes
Socialization
economics
politics
helping
Major Intervention Tasks
Institutional organization for involvement
Inviting involvement
Facilitating early involvement
Maintaining Involvement
Continuum of types of Home Involvement
Meeting basic obligations toward student/ meeting own
Communicating & making decisions regarding student
Supporting student's basic learning & development at home
Problem solving & providing support at home & school for student's special needs
Working for school's improvement
Working for improvement of all
Improve individual functioning
<-->
Improve system functioning

Figure 3. Enhancing home involvement: Intent, intervention tasks, and ways homes might be involved.

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