

Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care

As outlined in the project proposal,
“a literature review will be undertaken as a foundation for this initiative”.

A Literature Review and Internet Search

This phase of the work - the review of literature and internet search - was undertaken in order to become familiar with research articles, books, tools and web sites focusing on:

- North American advocacy and social movements including parents working to influence public policy and social attitudes and
- Advocacy strategies and activities, capacity building models, collaborative advocacy and community development.

The following notes provide an overview and **briefly** summarize:

- selected key points that will inform the work of Parent Voices;
- suggestions that provided ‘food for thought’; and
- practical ‘lessons’.

The ‘lessons’ provide valuable information and ‘pave the way’ for developing, facilitating and supporting individuals and organizations working together in *Parent Voices: Making the Case for Child Care*.

The review notes are organized into four sections:

1. lessons to be learned from research and advocacy;
2. advocacy strategies and activities, capacity building, and collaborative approaches;
3. understanding community development; and
4. parent advocacy - a preliminary annotated bibliography.

In the forward to **Every Kid Counts** {Inner City Schools in Vancouver, 2001, page iii} Joyce Preston, the first BC Child, Youth and Family Advocate, stated:

*“Systemic advocacy is hard work and takes a long time.
Progress is often measured in minor victories and sometimes
it feels like going two steps forward and one step back.”*

A Snapshot!

1. Lessons to be Learned from Research and Advocacy

Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada

Editor: Susan Prentice, 2001

In this anthology of ten articles, each author focuses on “historical relationships between child care mobilization and government policy in Canada”. {page 20} In reading these articles one becomes aware of the provincial/territorial historical similarities and differences in terms of government policy that supports the delivery of child care, or the lack of it, and the diversity in terms of regulation and service delivery.

In **Community Activism in Edmonton 1940 -1970**, Sheila D Campbell notes “History of daycare in Edmonton demonstrates that the actions of ordinary citizens can be an effective form of daycare advocacy. Many factors are involved in achieving success: altruistic motivation; thorough background knowledge of the issues; concerted, cooperative effort; persistence; local media involvement; plus good timing and luck.” {page 92}

In **From Social Movement to Marginalized Interest Groups: Advocating for Quality Child Care in Alberta, 1965 – 86**, Tom Langford talks about how child care advocacy has reflected the provincial government’s commitment to private enterprise and commercial child care as a “profit making investment”. The author advises that “advocates need recognize the limiting potential of particular historical junctures ... strive to broaden the base of support by involving groups who have nothing to gain materially from the adoption of child care policies”. {page 76}

Jane Jensen, in “**Family Policy, Child Care and Social Solidarity: The Case of Quebec**”, explains how Quebec’s, universal and affordable child care is at the centre of a much broader set of family policies. She talks about how progress made over the years and the government’s decisions to “announce a major reform of family policy, with universal and affordable child care at its centre, ... represented the victory of a coalition of activists and officials seeking to address the needs of families and children within Quebec’s societal strategy”. {page 39} The author noted the importance of mobilization of many activist groups and consultation with employers, unions, family organizations, women’s groups and youth some of whom one can assume may be parents, but were not identified as reflecting a parent perspective.

In **History, Lessons and a Case For Change in Child Care Advocacy**, Judith Martin looks back at past advocacy in Saskatchewan and notes that it is important to involve a broad range of public citizens including those working in child care, activists involved in church organizations and trades unions. She reminds the reader of the importance of developing educational approaches to reach out to the unconverted.

Child and Family Policies – Struggles, Strategies, and Options

Editors: Jane Pulkingham and Gordon Ternowetsky, 1997

In **Advocacy, Political Alliances and the Implementation of Family Policies**, Maureen Baker notes that like minded groups, e.g., coalitions of social justice groups and the trade union movement forming coalitions, are more likely to influence policy. She also comments on the fact that the ideology of the party in power is important in terms of spending priorities, which advocacy groups government listens to, and what policies they choose to adopt.

In **“My Kids Come First”: The Contradictions of Mothers’ “Involvement” in Childcare Delivery**, Susan Prentice and Evelyn Ferguson examined legislated citizen participation in Manitoba child care centres where a minimum of 20 % of the non-profit child care centre’s board of directors must be parents. The interviews highlighted the complex differences in volunteer participation of mothers of pre school aged children that paid a full fee for their child care (‘consumer mothers’) and mothers who receive subsidies to cover child care costs (‘client mothers’). While we all know that time is precious for mothers who work outside of the home, this research explains how low income parents receiving subsidy for their child care feel persistent pressure to be involved in an unpaid capacity, and always to do more, “mandatory volunteerism”.

Consumer Involvement and Control in Child Care: A Legislative Analysis

Volunteerism, Gender and the Changing Welfare State: A Case-study in Child Daycare

Evelyn B. Ferguson and Susan L. Prentice

This research looks at the relationship between parents and child care providers and examines policy and regulation approaches to parental participation “from a market –based model of parents as consumers /purchasers to a citizenship model of parents as collaborators entitled to involvement and control”. {Page 46} The authors discuss policy in different provinces/territories and examine the ‘consumer’ model, typically consistent with a conservative approach to both fiscal and social values, where the parents are viewed as ‘decision makers’ in their capacity to ‘purchase’ child care rather than being ‘citizens and partners in care’.

Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Postwar Daycare Fight

Susan L. Prentice

In this case study of 'progressive and feminist organizing', the child care advocacy coalition included women in welfare organizations, cultural groups, teachers' organizations, home/school associations, Trades and Labour Councils along with city alderman and school trustees. After providing considerable federal government support for child care services between 1942 and 1945, the decision to impose fiscal restraint was the justification used by government to cut daycare funding.

The Dynamics of Decentralization

Canada's Shifting Citizenship Regime: Investing in Children

Editors: T.C. Salmon and M. Keating, 2001

Jane Jenson writes about the current political context and changes which "imply a new way of thinking about and addressing the needs of children and families... the altering of intergovernmental relations with the creation of the Social Union Framework Agreement; patterns of redistribution which indicate a move away from universality to targeting programs to low income families; and changes in social policy which reflect a redefinition of the responsibilities of the state and of individuals". {pages 107-108}

Good Daycare: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It

Editor: K.G.Ross, 1978

The focus in this book is on child care as a women's, economic, human and social issue. It also speaks to societal responsibility to support and enhance families in their parenting responsibilities.

In the chapter titled "How to Organize", N. Sebastiano writes about;

- parents as the most important allies {page 92} and the importance of keeping parents well informed so that they can participate in advocacy;
- child care staff as a vital link in sharing information with parents;
- child care centres as one of the focal points for organizing family advocacy;
- the importance of links with support groups e.g., other children's services; women's organizations; labour organizations; professional associations; and voluntary non-profit social service organizations; and
- working towards public acceptance of the child care advocacy goals.

Group strategies related to advocacy efforts are suggested:

- ensure there is room for everyone who is interested in participating;
- acknowledge that different people are likely to be interested and comfortable with different tasks;
- know that using a variety of advocacy tactics simultaneously is advisable.

Specific activities identified include:

- petitions – publicize the cause and demonstrate the scope of support to politicians;
- letter and telephone campaigns;

- public meetings – generate publicity, utilize to clarify issues, and enlarge participation;
- print materials e.g., fact sheets – explain issues;
- elections – make child care an issue – survey candidates on their views and commitments to child care and then publicize survey results; lobby with personal visits/e mails with selected key messages the focal point over a set period of days;
- education – newsletters, articles, meetings.

Stepping Up for Child Care

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and CUPE

A range of advocacy/lobbying activities for families/community members are suggested:

- phoning – state key views and ask for a return call
- writing (letters by post, faxes, e mails) – briefly focus on key issues and what requesting
- meeting with politicians – prioritize key messages and rely on the power of personal stories
- local media – interviews, letters
- petitions – request a specific action

Speaking Out: Early Childhood Advocacy

S.G. Coffin and J. Lombardi

NAEYC, 1989

In this book, the authors talk about the importance of using a variety of approaches as they believe that there are many ways to work towards change. They talk of co-operative problem solving which requires:

- compromise and respectful listening;
- capacity to explain desired changes and ways to bring about change.

Several activities for effectively sharing knowledge are suggested:

- fact sheets and reports – highlight major issues and provide supporting data
- reviews of research and summaries of findings.

It is pointed out that involving parents means nurturing an interest in advocacy but not overwhelming parents:

- activities should build on what we know about parental involvement and the importance of listening to parents speak from personal experiences;
- the importance of linking child care with the ‘other hats’ parent’s wear in work/school/family life/communities; and
- training and opportunities for skill development in teaching/learning to talk with the media.

Facilitate group dynamics by:

- working towards coordinated activity and shared vision;
- building consensus in the groups and seeking to understand reasons behind differences;
- making sure there is time for all participants to express their views;
- fighting the issues not the people; and

- sharing information and keeping all participants informed.
- Ensure that individuals and group members do not get stuck on:
- protecting turf;
 - attending too many meetings so no time left for action;
 - waiting for everyone to catch up.

Stand Up for Your Gifted Child

J.F. Smutny, 2001

Effective parent groups working collectively to influence public policy need to:

- have a clear goal and purpose;
- ensure all members have a voice;
- meet regularly;
- share information and resources; and
- communicate regularly with members.

The Child Care Partnership Project Innovative Approaches: Engaging Parents

www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships/facts/fs9.htm

funded by: Child Care Bureau, US Dept of Health

“The success of many partnerships depends upon their ability to involve parents and build supports for new programs and strategies.”

Some examples:

- Boston: Parents United for Child Care (PUCC) is organizing and supporting parents to “effectively advocate for improvements in child care and family policy. Through community organizing and leadership training activities, PUCC helps parents to understand the policy arena, voice their concerns, set priorities and advocate in a unified and strategic manner”. The focus of their work is currently neighbourhood based organizing to increase the number of affordable, quality child care spaces.
www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships/profiles/united.htm
- Connecticut: The Parent Leadership Training Institute is teaching parents “who want to improve their children’s lifelong health and safety, and learn how to become change agents for the next generation”. Parents are learning many skills including how to speak publicly, utilize media, form useful coalitions, and strategize for action.

Several tips for success are described:

- developing the skills to ‘interact with business, community, or government leaders as change agents’;
- facilitating parent involvement by providing supports to ensure that parents can attend meetings (e.g., food, child care and transportation) and by providing training, leadership and mentoring programs; and

- drawing linkages between parents and families by having parents meet and recruit other parents and by building intergenerational strategies to involve other family members.

Parent Voices

A Project of California Child Care Resource and Referral Network

www.parentvoices.org

In their web site, Parent Voices is described as a ‘parent led grassroots organization fighting to make quality child care affordable and accessible to all families’. They are based in the San Francisco Bay area counties of California but focus their advocacy to improve child care not only in their county, but also in the state of California and across the U.S.

The Children’s Partnership (TCP)

Summary Report: Exploring Constituency Building Strategies for Children’s Issues: “What’s Working”, E. Schrayer, 1998

www.childrenspartnership.org/pub/schrayer/schrayer_report1.html

The Children’s Partnership commissioned research on successful activism in creating positive social change for children. This research project was ‘designed to explore and identify strategies and trends in organizing’ for children, to learn what was working, and to understand the opportunities and challenges of the current political climate in the U.S. The key findings focus on constituency building, building support for a children and family agenda in pre existing organizations, and nurturing a broad based children’s constituency. Lessons learned:

- define what you are for, not what you are against;
- reach out to non-traditional allies;
- identify and train parents as leaders;
- spend time developing simple key messages;
- put efforts to mobilize into targeted groups rather than with lots of individuals (create snowball effect by involving organizations who then reach out to their members); and
- integrate technology in a more effective way to educate and mobilize (e.g., connect web sites, create one master data base, set up mechanisms for broadcast fax).

Action Alliance for Children

Oakland, California

www.4children.org/chcare.htm

‘Children’s Advocate’ is their newsmagazine. This Alliance focuses on a range of child care issues e.g., , child care service delivery, inclusion, financing of child care; staff compensation and training - worthy wages, parent leadership and much more and offer many articles and print resources. The web site has information about their state wide Campaign titled: Child Care Champions 2000 where they coordinated collaborative

efforts with groups/organizations that were not previously focused on child care. This included: “Fight Crime”, “Invest in Kids”; labour unions; faith based organizations and others.

Connect for Kids

www.connectforkids.org/resources3139/resources_show.htm?doc_id=33584

This group developed and shared a ‘Tool Kit for Action’.

2. Advocacy Strategies and Activities, Capacity Building and Collaborative Approaches

Tools For Building Healthy Communities: Skills, Resources and Models for Action

Conference Report 1990

Forming Coalitions: Cultivating the Friends and Allies Needed to Develop a Healthy Community, D. Beck

“Cultivating allies is very much an organic process. Plant a seed, nurture it, some time in the future it will bear fruit. Sometimes you may have to cultivate the whole thing, plough it under and start all over again”. In coalition building it is critical to:

- Define the vision and keep it in the forefront.
- Seek out allies who have resources to help the groups achieve the vision.
- Always be in the learning mode “The strength of change is in you using my ideas and me using yours”.
- Be prepared to work with diverse groups.

It is pointed out that it is important to assume that people are more similar than different and collaborative relationships are best achieved and maintained when the groups are able to identify and works towards common goals.

Sharing the Community: Cross Cultural Challenge

The speaker noted that conflicts can escalate because of different cultural expectations and advises that it is always important to ask questions, find a common base and cope with conflict when it emerges.

Every Kid Counts

Noel Herron, 2001

This book documents the advocacy work of teachers, parents, individual community members and organizations, public school administrators and elected municipal officials in inner city Vancouver neighbourhoods. Key lessons:

- The inner city project “paid parents for child care and transportation. This was in recognition that if you involve poor people, you have to ensure they have access to involvement.” {page 7}
- The parents met frequently to define their goals, assess progress, and discuss and select a variety of strategies to move their issues forward. Once the initial funding commitment to the inner city project was secured, as long as the political will was there, much of their later ‘success’ was attributed to the combined efforts of parents and others.

Advocacy Without Burnout – A Self Help Manual

Advocacy Access Team, 1993

Co-operative Advocacy: Cooperative advocacy depends upon groups with common goals acting together and striving to achieve change. The success will be contingent upon accessing information and knowledge about the issues and communicating, that is both the capacity to gather the information and to get it out. Past experiences have taught advocates that the policy makers are influenced by the public – and the more the public supports the issues, the more influence the co-operative advocacy *may* have.

Knowledge and Skills for Effective Advocacy – The Advokit

Penticton Advocacy Network, 1997

Some important principles related to ‘cause’ advocacy:

- every participant is both a teacher and a learner;
- none of us are experts – some of us are experienced advocates, some are not; and
- we all have skills, knowledge and experience to contribute.

It is explained that participants typically filter experiences through own *beliefs* (a firm opinion) and *values* (strong beliefs about how things ought to be) and within any group, people usually have different values and beliefs; values may change over time and with different experiences. To successfully work collaboratively individuals will have to reach consensus on some key values. Helpful hint: “Never use a cannon where a pea shooter will do!”

Community Action Handbook
Healthy Child Care America – Blueprint for Action
1995, US National Child Care Health Care Forum

A collaborative model with a focus on community action depends upon:

- getting the message out and finding out who is interested;
- deciding on the goals, the reasons for working together, deciding who will be involved and who will take on tasks;
- deciding on when to meet, where, agreeing on decision making processes and activities; and
- gathering information and then establishing 3, 6 and 12 month plans.

Naming the Moment – Political Analysis for Action

A Manual for Community Groups

Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, D. Brandt, 1991

One of the key points is that the group needs to focus on what the participants support and believe in, and who (both individuals and groups) will collaborate along with you to support the cause.

3. Understanding Community Development

Community Development: A Road Much Traveled

SPARC News, Winter 1992/93, Vol. 9 Number 2, Pages 3-5

Social Planning and Research Council of BC, Len Richards

While different people define and interpret community development (C.D.) in different ways, this writer says that activists most commonly define it as being about cooperative approaches, coordination, interaction and development of communities.

Some see community development as a way of “creating community awareness of the need for change”. Some see it as “an *educational* as well as *organizational process*”. When it is talked about as *a process*, it involves citizen participation and people working together to create change. C.D. includes identifying problems, setting priorities, identifying available resources, group planning, group evaluation, and what this writer calls ‘re planning’ (moving forward based on where the group is at).

To effectively work towards achieving agreed upon objectives, individuals involved need to affirm support for what they are working towards, and then develop activities that will move their ‘community’ towards achieving objectives.

Some see community development as a *method*, a way that individuals and groups who share a *community of interest* (e.g., child care) work together in a coordinated and cooperative way.

The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity

F Frank and A Smith, 1999, for HRDC

This handbook is available online at:

www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/hrif/community-communautaire/menu/index.shtml

In this handbook, community development is described as “a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. The scope of community development can vary from small initiatives within a small group, to large initiatives that involve the whole community....The primary outcome is improved quality of life.” {Page 12}

Community development is a process, an approach and it builds upon, facilitates and strengthens community capacity. C.D. can be a useful approach to either a ‘threat’ or an ‘opportunity’ to a geographic region/community, or a “community of interest”.

The C.D. process is ongoing and is as important as the end result. Community development can happen when people:

- are committed to come together to seek areas of agreement and to build support for a common purpose;
- acknowledge the benefits of acting together with a collective voice and demonstrate a commitment to collective decision making;
- want to build on existing strengths, skills, knowledge and abilities in order to seek opportunities to have influence;
- are comfortable making plans, and adjusting the plans as needed (there is no one size fits all); and
- are committed to sustaining collective action.

A community development approach features inclusive processes that:

- are open and participatory;
- are respectful of differences and seeking solutions where there are areas of agreement;
- value the contributions of a variety of people; and
- are open to a variety of ways to participate.

“Community development is usually initiated by individuals who have passion and vision. If, however, community-based structures are not put into place to support this, even the best efforts can fail....The key thing to keep in mind is that support structures are necessary to manage the community development process as well as the change it creates. As this is an ongoing process, the structures will not be static. They will change and adapt as the community moves forward. .. Make sure that you see the structures you create as mechanisms to support your action, not as ends in themselves.” {page 29}

4. PARENT ADVOCACY

A PRELIMINARY ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, Bertrand James. 1981. *An analysis of the parameters of effective education advocacy participation as perceived by the participants*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

This dissertation investigates the effectiveness of varied forms of educational parental/consumer advocacy participation as perceived by the participants. The dissertation addresses four basic research questions: (1) What was the nature of the process through which advocacy groups facilitated increased parental participation in the schooling process? (2) What are the identifiable elements of the advocacy process in facilitating effective participation as perceived by the participants? (3) How is the program perceived by those whom it purports to serve? and (4) What are the perceived elements requisite for a model of advocacy participation? Eight educational consumer advocacy participation organizations located in four different regions of the continental United States were investigated through case studies. Four primary and four secondary educational consumer advocacy organizations were investigated: The Chicago Education Project (or American Friends Education Project of Chicago, Illinois); The Chicano Education Project of Denver, Colorado; The Children's Defense Fund of Jackson, Mississippi; and, The Boston Massachusetts Advocacy Center represented the primary sites investigated. The secondary sites investigated were: Florida's mandated Education Citizens Committees of Miami, Orlando and Winter Garden, Florida; AFRAM, and The Harlem Parents Union (both of New York City); and The National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, Maryland. A comparative analysis of the selected advocacy groups was completed and the common strengths and common elements of strategies and techniques for effective participation were ascertained. These advocacy organizations shared common strategies and techniques that worked for them. The successful advocacy strategies and techniques as well as advice offered by the groups studied are further shared in an exemplary model of educational consumer advocacy participation. This exemplary model of parental advocacy participation can be immediately useful to those initiating and/or contemplating the initiation of similar advocacy organizations. The model will increase the survival potential of a new organization and can also serve as a tool to help insure that newly formed advocacy groups guarantee parental participation in school governance. The model also represents the parameters of sustained and successful educational parent advocacy participation as perceived by participants.

Daniels, Susan M. 1982. "From parent-advocacy to self-advocacy: a problem of transition." *Exceptional Education Quarterly*. vol. 3(2): 25-32.

The author examines the increasing numbers of disabled individuals demanding the right to speak for themselves rather than having their parents advocate their rights and needs for them. The article explores both the reasons motivating this trend, as well as its

associated implications. The article considers issues involved in the disabled person's adoption of the self-advocate role, particularly in relation to whether the conflicts engendered by a transition from reliance on one's parents to reliance on oneself facilitate or impede the development of adult independence and maturity, peer group identification, sexuality, and goal setting in adult life. The author suggests that the conflict between parental- and self-advocacy reflects the developmental tasks of growing up and signals the recognition that persons with handicaps will become persons with their own voice (PsycINFO Database Record © 2000).

de Carvalho, Maria Eulina Pessoa. 1997. *Family-school relations: How enhanced parental participation in schooling reinforces social inequality and undermines family autonomy*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

The author argues that current educational policy initiatives (Goals 2000 among them) have been calling for family-school partnerships and more parental involvement in schooling, both in the academic work of children at home, and in shared decision making at school. The rhetorical promises of this policy are various and positive: enhancement in individual student achievement, family cohesion, school productivity, and educational opportunity. This study presents a theoretical exploration of the negative consequences of parental involvement as a policy, especially for family life, for public instruction as a specific practice, and for the democratic ideal of schooling. Because family material and cultural conditions and the meaning of education are radically different for families in different social classes, ethnic groups, and kinds of composition, the imposition of one model of parenting and family-school relations is likely to frame parents as subordinate actors, and simultaneously to increase the advantage of certain parents and students, further increasing inequality of educational outcomes. In this way, educational policy and practices, drawing on the family as a resource subordinated to the school curriculum, creates and reinforces structures for the play of cultural capital, with contradictory effects. Different contexts of inquiry and documentary sources are addressed as independent essays focusing on personal experience, history and sociology, research and policy rhetoric, and the case of homework. The analysis suggests the limits of equity within educational policy rationales prescribing the role of family in schooling.

DeVries, Jocie and Ann Waller. 1997. "Parent advocacy in FAS public policy change." In Ann Streissguth and Jonathan Kanter (eds.). *The challenge of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Overcoming secondary disabilities*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 171-180.

The authors describe their effective advocacy efforts for public policy change for increased services for people with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in Washington state, and their successful mobilization of a parent support network for political action. They focus on the efforts of parents working together out of common experience and desperation with the intention of improving the lives of individuals with FAS and their

families. While much of the chapter examines details specific to the subject of FAS, one objective of the chapter is to help parents and professionals utilize their own talents, skills, financial resources, and personal experiences to develop public education and intervention programs, as well as to influence public policy.

Fiedler, Craig R. and Richard F. Antonak. 1991. "Advocacy." In Johnny L. Matson and James A. Mulick (eds.). *Handbook of mental retardation* (2nd ed.). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, Inc., pp. 23-32.

The chapter argues that advocacy differs from other ways of helping people in that it promotes independence, equality and rights. The author examines five types of advocacy that have opened new horizons for people with mental handicaps: child advocacy, parent advocacy, citizen advocacy, self-advocacy, and legal and systems advocacy (PsycINFO Database Record © 2000).

Friesen, Barbara J. 1989. "Parents as advocates for children and adolescents with serious emotional handicaps: issues and directions." In Robert M. Friedman and Albert J. Duchnowski (eds.). *Advocacy on behalf of children with serious emotional problems*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Pub, pp. 28-44.

The chapter examines the broad implication of involving parents and promoting parent advocacy on behalf of children and adolescents who have serious emotional handicaps. The author explores factors such as stress, negative self-perceptions, "going public" and relationships with professionals that inhibit parent willingness and ability to engage in advocacy efforts. She presents a framework for considering four levels of parental involvement which may be useful to individuals and groups to assess their readiness to engage in advocacy (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2000).

Gettinger, Maribeth and Dristen Waters Guetschow. 1998. "Parental involvement in schools: parent and teacher perceptions of roles, efficacy, and opportunities." *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. vol. 32(1): 38-52.

This study examined perceptions of roles, efficacy, and opportunities for parental involvement in schools among 558 parents and 142 teachers in six schools. Parents and teachers completed parallel forms of a questionnaire that included ratings of preferred involvement by parents in 25 roles, perceptions of parents' effectiveness in enhancing children's school performance through each role, and ratings of the extent to which 16 potential barriers minimize opportunities for parents' participation. Factor analysis determined that parent-involvement activities can be grouped into two types of involvement roles: (a) direct contact or involvement with the child, and (b) indirect involvement, with less direct benefit specifically for the child. Overall, teachers rated parents as being more effective in helping children through their participation in activities than did parents themselves. Teachers also reported that parents have more barriers and fewer opportunities for involvement than parents actually reported. Information-gathering

and communication between parents and teachers regarding individual preferences, perceived effectiveness, and barriers to involvement are discussed as important prerequisites for establishing effective home-school partnerships. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2000)

Hinman, Linda K and Patricia J. Reynolds. 1992. "Family advocacy: the parent/professional team." Philipsburg, PA: Central Intermediate Unit 10.

The authors report on a project designed to develop a model of strategies to facilitate parental access to schools and educational services and to increase parental understanding of school district procedures and practices. Other objectives of the project were as follows: improve participating parents' communication skills and self-confidence; increase parents' awareness of the effect of their expectations, attitudes, and involvement on their children's success in school; increase the sensitivity of teachers and other professionals regarding parents' apprehension about interacting with the school system; and increase educational interaction between parents and children. Educational professionals and human service agency staff identified and recruited 36 parents of special needs and at-risk children enrolled in the Keystone Central School District in Pennsylvania. A parent advocacy curriculum was developed and coordinated with workshops and classes already meeting at the local development center for adults. In the professional segment of the project, meetings were held with school professionals for the purpose of increasing their awareness of parent-teacher interaction issues, identifying issues they felt should be addressed in the parent classes, and gaining input on improving parent-professional interaction. Parent feedback regarding the project has been positive, and a project implementation manual has been developed.

Kaminsky, Steven Robert. 1983. *Case Study: Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

The author chronicles the eleven year (1970-1981) history of Advocates For Children of New York, Inc., a major New York City public school student/parent advocacy organization. The author intends the document to be utilized as a blueprint for success for existing and emerging student/parent advocacy organizations. The study traces the development of Advocates For Children and its predecessor organizations from a volunteer-based advocacy resource for individuals to organized force for institutional change. The author identifies legislative and court decisions which stimulated and shaped the development of Advocates For Children and provides guidelines for emerging and existing advocacy organizations. The researcher contends that since New York City has the largest public school system and because bureaucracies tend to create barriers to their constituents, New York City's one million school children population merits advocacy. The need to monitor, evaluate, question and raise public consciousness to school practices and policies provides an important system of checks and balances. The study cites Advocates For Children's initiation of successful class action suits seeking equal educational opportunities for handicapped and other disadvantaged students, and promotes student rights in issues involving suspensions. The organization also informs

educational consumers about their rights and provides advocacy training for individuals and local organizations.

Levine, Eliot Bernard. 1998. *Management for educational success: A grounded theory of low-income Latino parent involvement in their children's education.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland College Park. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

The author argues that perspectives of Latino parents are underrepresented in the parent involvement literature, resulting in theories that neglect important sociocultural characteristics relevant to program design, implementation, and evaluation. In this study, fourteen urban, low-income Latino parents were interviewed about their involvement with their elementary school children's education. The grounded theory method was used to develop a theoretical framework describing the process and meaning of parent involvement from the perspective of these parents, thereby extending the theoretical foundation of the literature as a step toward more effective parent involvement. The emergent theoretical framework characterized parents as struggling to manage diverse ecological demands in service of their children's educational success. Management included not only features commonly associated with managerial functioning such as monitoring, evaluating, and structuring, but also features such as navigating unfamiliar and sometimes uninviting environments with limited resources. Educational success encompassed academic, behavioural, and moral domains, and was generally considered a stepping-stone to broader future aspirations rather than an end in itself. Managing educational success transpired within a parent context of immigrant and culture issues, multiple life demands, motivations for success, parent-to-parent relations, and diverse parent attributes, as well as a school context characterized by varying levels of cultural sensitivity, invitingness, delinquency, and language accessibility. Key findings included elaboration of processes underlying parent advocacy strategies and management of the home-school interface, as well as the emergence of parent efficacy expectations as an important determinant of involvement. Each aspect of the theoretical framework merits further elaboration through future research but also, in conjunction with existing theories and findings, provides guidance for development of parent involvement programs.

Lingbeck, Jeanne Kathryn. 1998. *Parent advocacy gone awry: a case study.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Thomas (St. Paul). Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

Parent advocacy in education is not a new idea as parents have always been involved in the educational lives of their children. Today, however, the author argues that the type of involvement is different than it was years ago; and the situations encountered do not always fit the parent advocacy literature. This study (a) analyzes historical records surrounding advocacy incidences; (b) reflects on the boundaries established as a result of these incidents; (c) contrasts the responses of one elementary school with the responses of eight other schools; and (d) draws some conclusions that might be useful points of discussion for new administrators. The study reflected upon the prevailing philosophy

that parent advocacy leads to better academic performance and/or stronger school/community relationships. Through a historical document search and follow-up interviews the author looks at behaviours that we traditionally think of as 'good' parenting habits and how they can be inverted and do more harm than good. The author examines pressures felt by the school personnel and the politics involved in relating to the school's parent community. The author also looks at the barriers and the boundaries that were set as a result of this unsuccessful parent advocacy relationship. Further, she looks at how not only Metro Elementary School handled a series of parent advocacy incidents, but also how eight other districts reported they would have handled similar situations. She looks at how commonly accepted behaviours such as protecting your child, open communication, discipline, making personal visits to your child's teacher, establishing an extended family and providing medical treatment for your child were all inverted, turned up-side down, and seen as negative and interfering behaviours instead of supportive behaviours.

Mlawer, Mark A. 1993. "Who Should Fight? Parents and the Advocacy Expectation." *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. vol. 4(1): 105-116.

The author suggests that an advocacy expectation has been created in an attempt to help parents become better educational advocates for their children with disabilities. According to Mlawer, the expectation runs counter to the philosophy of normalization. This expectation and its effects are critically discussed in the article. The author argues that the expectation's harmful consequences can be countered by changing professional roles, funding priorities, and program development.

"Parents leading the way." 1996. *Family Resource Coalition Report*. vol. 15(2). Available from Family Resource Coalition, 2000 South Michigan Ave. 16th Floor, Chicago.

This special issue of the Family Resource Coalition Report presents personal experiences and reflections regarding parent involvement and leadership in family support. The volume includes the following articles: (1) "The Vaughn Family Center: It's My Story" (Jorge Lara and Matt Oppenheim); (2) "Asking the Right Questions is Key to Developing Parent Advocacy" (Luz Santana); (3) "Parents United and Uniting" (Mark Smith); (4) "New York Parents Become Partners in Policy Making" (Sally Mehrtens and others); (5) "Getting Involved in State-Level Planning: One Parent Walks the Long, Rocky Road of Collaboration" (Carmen Siberon); (6) "Using Computers to Build Local Community: Newark Residents are Turning MUSIC Into Health and Education" (Pamela Morgan); (7) "Parent Network Empowers a Community" (Beverly Bell, Jr.); (8) "Houston Family Advocacy Network is Parents' Vehicle for Change: FAN Members Speak"; (9) "Community Involvement in Program Decision Making" (Bryan Samuels and Tony Markward); (10) "Becoming a Board Member: A Parent's Story"; (11) "Georgia's Youth Futures Authority Involves Youths and Adults in Local Planning" (Jacqueline Elmore); (12) "Parent Network Center: Parents Help Each Other Advocate for Children with Disabilities" (Joan M. Watkins); (13) "Turning Up the Volume on Parent Feedback In Evaluation" (Nilofer Ahsan); (14) "Empowering Parents is Mining Diamonds in the

Rough" (Ted Bowman); and (15) "National Parent Assembly: Opportunities, Challenges, and Results" (Lucy Trujillo and Kathy Goetz Wolf).

Peters, Marie and Norris G. Haring (eds.). 1982. *Building an alliance for children: parents and professionals*. Seattle: University of Washington/Program Development Assistance System.

This monograph contains seven papers on developing and maintaining cooperation between parents of handicapped children and education professionals. B. Pattison reviews the history of parent involvement and advocacy and offers suggestions for improving school and community relations in "The Early Years and Now: The History of the Parent Advocacy Movement." In "Parents and Professionals," D. Lipton describes her experiences as the mother of a child with cerebral palsy. M. Peters and M. Noel ("Parent Perspectives about Professional and Parent Cooperation") present the reflections of 12 parents of handicapped children gathered from structured interviews. "The Advocacy Process" by W. Dussault, stresses the need to explore, negotiate, and compromise before initiating due process. Three papers then describe educators' attempts to improve the parent-professional communication process: "An Integrative Model of Parent Involvement" (J. Wright); "Maximizing Evaluation of Handicapped Children by Integrating the Efforts of Parents, Child, and School" (A. Greenwood); and "Parent Involvement: A Challenge for Teacher Training Institutions" (R. Kroth, H. Otteni, and P. Parks).

Pizzo, Peggy. 1990. "Parent advocacy: a resource for early intervention." In Samuel J. Meisels and Jack P. Shonkoff (eds.). *Handbook of early childhood intervention*. New Nork: Cambridge University Press, pp. 668-678.

The chapter addresses three issues. The first explores the origin of parent advocacy for early intervention services within the context of the parent advocacy movement in general. The second examines the sensitive issues of anger between parent advocates and professionals during both advocacy and the delivery of early intervention services. The third discusses the implications of this movement for the creation of new models of human services (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2000)

Plunge, Michele, Dristen Waters Guetschow, Thomas R. Kratochwill and Maribeth Gettinger. 1996. "Parent advocacy: making the assessment and intervention process user-friendly." In Michael J. Breen and Craig R. Fiedler (eds.). *Behavioral approach to assessment of youth with emotional/behavioural disorders: a handbook for school-based practioners*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc., pp. 583-629.

The chapter describes ways in which school-based practitioners can advocate and promote the involvement of parents in the assessment and instructional process for children with EBD (emotional or behavioural disorders). The authors present information and research findings in 3 areas related to involvement of parents: (a)

theoretical models and documented benefits of parental involvement; (b) entitlements and rights of parents according to federal laws that govern the provision of services for children with disabilities; and (c) analysis of potential barriers to parents' active involvement in their child's education. The chapter describes practices for school-based practitioners relative to consultation services, assessment practices, and placement decisions. The authors also develop a theoretical perspective and parent-advocacy training model that provide school-based practitioners strategies for fulfilling their roles as parent advocates (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2000).

Searcy, Sheri, Carla Lee-Lawson and Betsy Trombino. 1995. *Remedial and Special Education*. vol. 16(5): 307-314.

Thirty-three leaders in parent advocacy and training responded to a questionnaire in which they were asked to discuss their experiences in being mentored and in mentoring others. The authors discuss the results in terms of the context in which mentoring develops, identifying mentoring themes. Mentoring is viewed as a special relationship that develops between 2 individuals where the mentor recognizes a uniqueness or potential in the less experienced person and takes a special interest in the growth of that person. Likewise, the protégé admires or values the experience and knowledge of the mentor and wishes to emulate this. Seven themes relative to effective mentoring of parents of children with disabilities are (1) mentors model desirable qualities or behaviours, (2) they teach and share knowledge, (3) they provide guidance or advice, (4) they actively listen to thoughts and feelings, (5) they provide support and encouragement, (6) they promote protégés to others, and (7) they make a commitment of time, energy, and interest in the protégé's growth. Specific mentoring activities are provided and barriers to mentoring are also identified. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2000).

Skyer, Gilbert David. 1988. *The effects of a group advocacy program for parents of learning-disabled children*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

The Group Advocacy Program for parents of learning disabled children was designed to focus on two elements associated with empowering a parent to advocate for an appropriate education of a learning disabled child. The first element the parent required was information regarding how to address issues and individuals within the school system. The second element the parent required was a working understanding of the child's particular disability, so the parent could more effectively advocate for the child in the school system. That element of understanding was identified as central to giving the parent sufficient insight to facilitate an effective educational experience for the child involved. In order to ascertain the impact of a parent advocacy program on the advocacy attitudes and behaviours of parents of LD youngsters, a group of parents was seen weekly for a period of six months. These parents were exposed to the parent education curriculum in a setting where the group leader used the Theme-Centered Interactional Method for Ruth Cohn (1972) in order to discuss a range of related topics in each of the sessions. A three-part questionnaire was developed to measure the impact of the program on parent knowledge and attitudes regarding their LD children. This

questionnaire measured gains in the participant's knowledge and attitudes toward learning disabilities. The specific positive behaviours practiced as a result of these group meetings were also measured. These behaviours were further analyzed to determine the degree to which the gains were directed more toward the community, more toward the children, or if the gains were directed relatively equally. The results indicated that positive changes were made by all parents who participated in the group sessions. These positive gains occurred in their behaviour, as well as in their fund of information and attitudes. While related gains were identified, the most significant gains were made in the area of direct child advocacy.

Tran, Bach Tuyet Pham et. al. 1986. "Cross-cultural issues in parent involvement." In Carmen Simich-Dudgeon (ed.). *Issues of parent involvement and literacy. Proceedings of the Symposium held at Trinity College (Washington DC, June 6-7 1986).*

This monograph includes four papers that explore cultural issues related to the involvement of limited-English-proficient parents in public schools in the United States. "Cultural Issues in Indochinese Parent Involvement" (Bach-Tuyet (Pham) Tran) outlines the linguistic, social, and practical barriers to Indochinese immigrant parent involvement and makes suggestions for changing that situation. "Parental Involvement: Building on Overseas Initiatives" (J. Patrick Redding) examines the ways in which U.S. pre-immigration programs are building potential and expectations for participation in the schools among parents. "Cross-Cultural Policy Issues in Minority and Majority Parent Involvement" (Virginia P. Collier) reviews a variety of concerns related to majority and language-minority parent involvement in general, parent advocacy in bilingual education, parents as teachers' aides and on advisory councils, parent leadership training institutes, parent education, and integrated majority-minority parent involvement. "Why Parent Tutors? Cultural Reasons" (Jose Oliva) gives reasons for training Hispanic parents to be tutors for their children, illustrated with experiences from Family English Literacy programs in five New Jersey communities. A response to the presentations by two specialists is also summarized. (MSE)

Yamada, Vivian A. 1997. *An evaluation of parent involvement in a rural elementary school: Parents' and teachers' perceptions of current practices and needs.* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Available from Dissertation Abstracts.

The author evaluates parent involvement efforts in a rural elementary school. The purpose of the project was to obtain perceptions of current parent involvement practices and suggestions for improving these practices in the future. The study was carried out with the close collaboration of the school staff. In Phase 1 of the study, samples of 17 parents and 7 teachers completed semi-structured interviews addressing these issues. In Phase 2, a larger sample of 82 parents completed questionnaires, in which items generated in the Phase 1 interviews were rated and opinions were given in response to open-ended questions. The interview and questionnaire results identify parent involvement practices currently working well, obstacles to parent involvement, and

suggestions for overcoming these obstacles and making parent involvement easier for parents. The parent questionnaire showed mildly positive evaluations of current parent-school relationships and very positive ratings regarding the helpfulness of school activities and the proposed topics for future parent meetings. Useful information was obtained regarding methods of parent-school communication and parent-school meetings. Overall, the study suggests specific ways that an elementary school can evaluate and improve parent involvement practices.

Other Cites that May Be of Interest

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Russell, Mary Ellen. 2001. "Parent advocacy spurs school choice decisions." *Momentum* (Washington, DC). vol. 32(2): 30-31.