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FOCUSING ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT: A PARENT RESOURCE PACKET

Susan Stuber

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The role of parents in the education of their children has been receiving a great deal of attention recently. Educators have long recognized the value of parent involvement, not only as it pertains to the academic well-being of children, but as a means of raising the level of community awareness concerning school programs and curriculum. Parents who have an understanding of their child's academic program, it is felt by many, and a commitment to the supportive role they can play with children at home, will feel a "partnership" with their local school district.

INCREASING EFFORTS

Over the last decade we have seen efforts to stimulate parent involvement grow from informal classroom teacher efforts to a concerted effort on the part of national organizations, state and federally funded educational programs, and educational publishing companies. Classroom teachers and local school districts continue to encourage parents to get involved with their children's reading program, but this is more easily said than done! Periodically, school districts and reading councils have published "shopping lists" of suggestions for parents to implement at home. These are helpful measures, but still do not fully educate parents about district reading programs and may not meet specific needs parents have regarding their children.

The Michigan Reading Association has recognized these shortcomings. For several years the Ad Hoc Committee on Parents and Volunteers has been seeking to provide school districts and reading

councils with help toward resolving the dilemma of parent involvement. The Michigan Reading Association has provided educators with an informational brochure entitled *Parents: Help Your Child to Read Better!* A number of sessions at recent annual conferences have been devoted to parent involvement, among them a Mini-Conference for Parents this year.

MRA PACKET

During the past several months, the Michigan Reading Association's Ad Hoc Committee on Parents and Volunteers has been compiling a *Parent Resource Packet* for use by local school districts or reading councils. The packet is designed to assist in recruiting parents and securing their active participation in a supportive role in encouraging children to read. The resource packet, presently in the final rewrite stage, will be field-tested during the 1980-81 school year.

The contents of the *Parent Resource Packet* are as follows:

Chapter I - "The Foundation for Developing Meaningful Parent Inservice"

- A model for pre-inservice planning

- Audience assessment ideas and activities to use with parents.

Chapter II - "The Reading Growth Guide"

- A beginning inservice program for use with parents, summarizing child development and reading growth from pre-school through high school

- Using the "Reading Growth Guide" as the focal point for parent inservice

Chapter III - "The Needs Assessment: Using the Reading Growth Guide As An Informational Base"

- Sample needs assessment methods to use with parents

Chapter IV - "Components of a Successful Parent Inservice Presentation"

- How to put together each parent inservice program you do

Chapter V - "A Sample Parent Inservice Program"

- A sample program developed using the components in Chapter IV

Chapter VI - "Bibliography of Parent Inservice Materials"

- Speakers on topics of concern to parents

- Parent resources, books, and materials currently available to use

The *Parent Resource Packet* emphasizes the need to educate parents about child development and academic growth as they pertain to reading. The "Reading Growth Guide" provides an informational base upon which the parent inservice can develop any number of individual inservice programs that meet the assessed needs of her/his parent group. The bibliography of inservice materials is useful for obtaining specific books, resources, speakers, etc., that pertain to parent involvement.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Parents and Volunteers is optimistic that the *Parent Resource Packet* will be beneficial to reading councils and local school districts that wish to initiate meaningful parent involvement programs.