DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE PARENT PARTICIPATION IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM ADAPTING THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

MASTER'S PROJECT

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by

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The Parents of Overfield Early Childhood Program

The Staff of Overfield Early Childhood Program
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated, first and foremost, to my husband Joe. Your constant encouragement, support, and troubleshooting helped me keep in sight the light at the end of the tunnel.

This project is also dedicated to all the parents, teachers, and children of Overfield. Without your cooperation and enthusiasm this project would never have been born.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Purpose for the Study

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that a high quality early childhood program "provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of families" (Bredekamp, 1987, pp. 1). The extent to which knowledge about child development is applied in programs is also important in determining program quality. Developmentally appropriate programs consider both what is age appropriate for a group of children, and what is individually appropriate for each child in that group. Developmentally appropriate programs are tailored to meet the needs of children, rather than expecting children to adjust to the demands of a specific program (Bredekamp, 1987).

A key point of the developmentally appropriate program is that it is a child centered-program. A child-centered program assesses each child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, and then provides a stimulating learning environment to meet the developmental needs of children. A stimulating learning environment offers children a variety of experiences to interact with their environment and others (Peterson, 1987).

Critical to developing a child-centered and developmentally appropriate program is the need to understand education as a holistic experience. Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and
develop, and thus, the two are linked (Coleman, 1991). Learning is a social process and students relate to schools not as isolated individuals, but as members of families, peer groups, and communities (Seely, 1984). In order to meet the needs of children, programs must address the needs of families.

Collaboration between school programs and parents becomes critical because cooperative relationships between parents and schools support the idea of learning as a social process and helps build bridges between home and school experiences. Early childhood educators have long recognized the need for communication between home and school. According to Bundy (1991), parents know their children intimately and have much valuable information to share with teachers. Teachers are knowledgeable about child development and have experiences with young children, which makes them valuable resources for parents.

One important outcome of collaboration between parent and school is that parents who are part of the educational process can have a significant impact on student achievement (Palestis, 1994). Trelease (1982) states that "when children have been read to, they enter school with larger vocabularies, longer attention spans, greater understanding of books and print, and consequently have the fewest difficulties in learning to read" (pp. 2). At a time when the media is bombarding us with stories about the failure of the American school the National Commission on Excellence in Education, in its report A Nation at Risk, speaks of a rising tide of mediocrity [in American schools] , then an effort to support and increase student achievement is critical. Parents can be instrumental in this process.

Parent involvement in the schools not only promises individual student success, but on a broader plane the success and survival of the American public
school. Often parents blame teachers for poor teaching, while teachers blame parents for poor parenting. As Seely (1994) suggests, "we are paralyzed by mutual blame-placing. Instead education [can be] seen as a shared responsibility of home, school and community. The partnership model enables us to talk constructively about how we have failed in the past and how we can work together in the future... to fashion a new, collaborative approach that has a better chance to succeed" (pp. 386).

American schools insist that increased communication with parents and increased parent involvement in the schools strengthens the learning process and ultimately creates better schools. Collaboration with parents supports learning as a social process with the student at the center, respects the role of parent as teacher, and increases student achievement (Seely, 1984). These are three excellent reasons for collaboration between schools and parents.

Why then, with all the evidence that parent involvement in the schools is essential to creating better schools, do many American educators and parents alike feel uncomfortable in developing a partnership? Often, parent involvement in schools is minimal because schools lack strong volunteer recruitment and coordination programs, teachers and parents alike are ambivalent about volunteer programs, and frequently, there is simply no clear plan for what volunteers can do in the schools (Lancy & Nattiv, 1992). And, despite the call for increased parent involvement, many parents continue to understand schooling as an experience separate from the home experience; many parents feel uncomfortable working with teachers (Lareau, 1987).
In a town in northern Italy, however, is a community that has a rich and long history of educational partnership between parents, educators, and community members. Since Newsweek magazine, (December, 1991), named a pre-school in Reggio-Emilia, Italy the best in the world, U.S. educators have studied the Reggio schools for approaches to improve early childhood programs. The strong and active role of parents in Reggio schools are evident in literature and studies of the Italian program (Palestis, 1994). Reggio teachers, parents, and administrators insist that the quality of their school program depends on the positive partnership between parents and school staff (Spaggiari, 1993). This concept of partnership is a unique aspect of the Reggio philosophy.

The Overfield Early Childhood Program in Troy, Ohio, for several years, has developed its curriculum and school program to reflect the philosophy and values of the schools in Reggio. As this pre-school program in Troy adapts its program, incorporating the Reggio approach to education, the staff is increasingly aware of the importance of parent involvement in the school program, as well as a sense of partnership between parents and teachers. The staff believes that parent involvement in a school program enhances the quality and richness of the school experience. After several years of study and professional in-service on the Reggio approach, the Overfield staff listed increased and improved parent and staff collaboration as a goal for the 1994-1995 school year. In an effort to meet this challenging goal a variety of diverse and important opportunities for parent involvement was offered.

The writer, too, believes that parent involvement in the school experience is a good indicator of the quality of the school experience. Schools with
significant parent involvement are more likely to achieve positive experiences for students, parents, and teachers. In response to this belief and the Overfield staff's goal for improving parent collaboration, the writer conducted this research project.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine if adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education increases and improves parent participation in an early childhood program.

Hypotheses

1. Adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education will increase the quantity and quality of parent involvement in the school program by providing many and diverse opportunities for participation.
2. Adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education will have a positive impact on parent attitudes toward school experiences.
3. Adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education will have a positive impact on staff attitudes toward parent involvement.

Research Questions

1. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education increase the quantity and quality of parent involvement in the school program?
2. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education have a positive impact on parent attitudes toward school experiences?
3. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education have a positive impact on staff attitudes toward parent involvement?
Assumptions

The writer assumes that the samples used in the study are adequate to reflect the general attitudes of parents and teachers. The writer also assumes that parents and teachers responded honestly.

Limitations

The writer finds several limitations affecting this study. First, the study was designed with no control group. Second, the duration of the study was one school year. Finally, the study included a limited group of school parents.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration. Collaboration is a reciprocal pooling of knowledge and information about individual children, principles of child development, and school philosophy between the school staff and parents.

Developmental Appropriateness. Developmental appropriateness has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Age appropriateness refers to the typical development of children, based on universal, predictable sequences of growth and change during the first nine years of life, within an age span of those nine years. Individual appropriateness refers to the unique individual pattern and timing of growth and development of an individual child.

Early Childhood. Early childhood generally includes the ages birth through nine years old.

Parent Participation. Parent participation includes any and all types of parent involvement in the school community, including such activities as participation in
meetings, conferences, classroom activities, maintenance, field trips, special events, and celebrations. Other activities may be included as parent participation.

Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education. So named because of the town in which this philosophy has evolved; this is a philosophy of education grounded in the belief that children are knowledgeable, capable, and powerful thinkers who bring a vast array of knowledge and experience to the learning experience. Included in this image of the child is the image of the family as important and essential to the learning experience. A partnership between parents, educators, and community members is a critical aspect of the philosophy (Spaggiari, 1993).

Staff. Staff includes all classroom teachers, special teachers, child care teachers, and the school director.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review contains sections on the characteristics of high quality early childhood programs, collaboration between early childhood programs and parents, parent participation, the characteristics of the Reggio Emilia early childhood program, and the characteristics of American schools adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

Characteristics of High Quality Early Childhood Programs

In response to a greater need for out-of-home care and education during the early years of life, the number of early childhood programs has increased dramatically. As this trend continues, and the belief that quality early childhood education be available to all families, educators have worked to develop an understanding of what quality early childhood education actually is. Quality early childhood programs tend to have similar goals: goals for a developmentally appropriate curriculum, positive adult-child interactions, a child-centered program, and a strong collaborative relationship between home and school.

Again and again quality programs share a common element; quality programs are developmentally appropriate programs. According to Bredekamp (1987), a major determinant of program quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in program practices - the degree to which the program is developmentally appropriate.
Developmental appropriateness has two facets: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Age appropriateness refers to activities that are appropriate for typically developing children within an age span. Research indicates that there are predictable patterns and sequences of growth in the first nine years of life. Understanding these sequences allows educators to understand what and how children learn at a particular age. Individual appropriateness simply relates to the fact that each child is a unique person with an individual schedule of growth and change. Educators who recognize individual differences can respond to these differences and tailor activities for individual children's needs (Bredekamp, 1987).

A developmentally appropriate curriculum, then, is one that is planned to be appropriate for the age span of children within the group and is implemented with attention to the different needs, interests, and developmental levels of those individual children (Bredekamp, 1987). A developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children includes goals for the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children, and above all considers how to build self-esteem in young children. Planning is based on observation of children's interests and development. After planning curriculum based on children's interests teachers must prepare the learning environment for children. The environment should encourage interaction with other children, adults, and materials. All activities and materials should be real and concrete and relevant to the children's lives. Teachers should provide a variety of activities, materials, and equipment for children to explore, and as children master these activities, teachers should continue to introduce more complex and challenging activities (Bredekamp, 1987; Wolery, 1991). Self-esteem in children
naturally grows when they are provided with a rich environment that offers them chances for success and further development of their interests and needs.

Play is an essential component of any developmentally appropriate curriculum. Through play, young children gain mastery over their bodies, discover the world and themselves, acquire new skills, and cope with complex and conflicting emotions (Zeece & Graul, 1990). Play stimulates thinking and helps children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically. Many cognitive skills are developed through play. Young children's play supports language development as children model adult speech, communicate with each other, and try out new words and phrases. Through play children manipulate materials and objects, learning to construct, compare, and problem solve. Play also supports social development as children interact and play with others. Play allows children to explore their feelings and emotions, as well. Young children test limits, recreate frightening experiences, and make "mistakes", in a safe way. Finally, play challenges children physically, as well. Whether play is putting together a puzzle and using fine motor skills or playing Duck, Duck, Goose and developing gross motor skills, play allows children to use their bodies. (Zeece & Graul, 1990).

How, then, does the teacher or the adult support a curriculum in which children play, grow cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically, and are constantly challenged as individuals? The relationship between the child and the adult is critical in a developmentally appropriate program, in fact, it is the cornerstone of a program. In a developmentally appropriate program, adults, first, expect age appropriate behavior and are aware of individual differences among children. Second, adults develop a curriculum based on children's interests and
developmental needs, providing an environment rich in materials and experiences for exploration and play. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, adults facilitate a child's successful completion of tasks by providing support, focused attention, physical proximity, and verbal encouragement. Adults recognize that children learn from trial and error and that children's misconceptions reflect their developing thoughts (Bredekamp, 1987).

As facilitators, teachers guide and support all types of learning and growth. Cognitive growth is supported as teachers set up the environment for learning, communicate with children, and help children to examine problems and seek different solutions. Teachers support emotional development in recognizing a child's changing moods and levels of stress, offering activities for coping with new feelings. Social skills are modeled as adults offer clear, consistent guidelines for behavior and facilitate self-control in children. Self-esteem is encouraged and developed as children play and learn in a safe, appropriate environment with adults who respect and accept all children (Bredekamp, 1987).

When adults act as facilitators, guiding, supporting and encouraging children to explore and learn on their own, the early childhood program is truly child-centered. The child is accepted as a unique individual with particular interests and developmental needs. Those interests and needs help direct the curriculum, the teacher's choice of materials, and how the teacher sets up the environment. As the child plays and interacts with the environment and others the child learns at his/her own pace and developmental level. The child is always respected as the center, the heart of the school program.
Collaboration Between Early Childhood Programs and Parents

Collaboration between school staff and parents is another characteristic, and perhaps the most important, of the quality early childhood program. Parents have both the right and the responsibility to share in decisions about their children's care and education. Parents should be encouraged to observe and participate (Bredekamp, 1987). Collaboration between early childhood programs and parents strengthens the school program, supports families and the community, and supports individual children. School programs that collaborate with parents recognize and respect the inextricable bond between schools and families, the role of parents as teachers, and the benefits of mutual support of children's learning and self-esteem (Coleman, 1991).

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and develop (Coleman, 1991). Because of this the family and school are linked. It is the child that is the link. Family experiences will influence a child's school experience and school experiences will influence the family. Teachers and parents share a common goal: the optimal growth and development of the child. This common interest makes parents and teachers important allies (Bundy, 1991). Research shows, as well, that when families are enthusiastic about their children's schools and child-care centers, children's self-esteem increases reducing discipline problems and promoting learning. The family that endorses the school sends a strong message; the family endorses this other world, the one where the child spends all the school-year weekdays of his childhood (Greenberg, 1989).

Conversely, teachers can help build self-esteem in children by endorsing their other world at home. Teachers need to understand and respect the diversity in
family backgrounds, appreciate cultural differences, and integrate family experiences into the classroom (Coleman, 1991). The amount of respect given to the parent by the teacher has a great impact on children's attitudes and happiness in school. Children who know that the school respects their family have greater self-esteem and success in school. Schools and families that work together to nurture children provide children with the knowledge that family and school agree on what is important (Greenberg, 1989).

Historically, families and schools in America have always shared a relationship. For more than two centuries, parents have had some role in supporting American school programs. Over the centuries parent support has been primarily economic; parents provided room and board for teachers, provided teacher salaries, and funded public education through tax dollars. However, parents have not been involved in the cognitive aspects of schooling. There now exists a growing belief that parents must support schools economically and that they must also reinforce children's cognitive development - a responsibility formerly left to teachers (Lareau, 1987).

A great deal of research asserts that much of a child's cognitive development occurs before the child ever reaches school. According to Meyerhoff and White (1986) a great deal of important learning takes place during the first three years of life, that home is the first schoolhouse and parents are the first teachers. Meyerhoff and White (1986) suggest that "children most likely to succeed share a variety of intellectual, linguistic, and social skills that clearly set them apart from their average and below-average peers. It soon became clear to us that they were exhibiting this impressive pattern of abilities by the time they were 3
years old" (pp. 42). Children with these intellectual, linguistic, and social skills have parents who allowed their children access to a large and stimulating environment. Children were allowed to move freely about their homes. The parents of these children provided new learning opportunities, not through expensive toys or specific games, but by letting children help bake cookies, accompany them on a trip to the supermarket and so on. These parents set up interesting environments, allowed their children to indulge their natural curiosity, and then followed their children's leads (Meyerhoff & White, 1986).

According to Trelease (1982) children who have been read to at home enter school with larger vocabularies, longer attention spans, and a greater understanding of print. These children have greater success in learning to read. Trelease (1982) lists four factors that contribute to children's success in reading. These four factors include being read to on a regular basis, having a variety of printed material, the availability of paper and pencil, and people in the home who model and encourage reading. Research about parents and children who read together at home and play together at home certainly supports the idea that parents truly are the first teachers.

Quality early childhood programs recognize the importance of collaboration with families and make collaboration a top priority of their program, but what can programs do to support and encourage collaboration? Bundy (1991) states that "parents know their children intimately and have much valuable information to share with teachers. Teachers are knowledgeable about child development and have experiences with young children that make them valuable resources for parents" (pp. 12). Communication between parents and teachers
must be the starting point for collaboration. Bundy (1991) divides communication into two broad categories: "(1) general information about the school's philosophy, curriculum, upcoming events, and activities, and information that has a general appeal to most of the families and (2) specific information about individual children" (pp. 12-13).

Communicating the school philosophy begins immediately. An early childhood program must state its developmental philosophy for parents. Parents can then match their own expectations to the philosophy and determine if the school is, in fact, where they want to send their child. Orientation meetings and school visits provide parents an opportunity to meet school staff, other parents, and to see the school building. School handbooks provide parents with information on school policies, staff, tuition, school hours, and an overview of the school philosophy. Before the school year even begins groundwork is set for a relationship between teachers and parents (Bundy, 1991).

As the year continues early childhood programs can set up more lines of communication. Many teachers send newsletters that inform parents about happenings in the classroom and school. Newsletters might tell of upcoming events such as field trips or birthdays, contain articles on child development and parenting, or explain curriculum plans such as a study of dinosaurs. Many teachers offer parents advice on follow-up activities, visits to museums, and titles of library books that parents can use at home with their child. Curriculum plans can also be displayed at school on bulletin boards. When parents drop off or pick up their children they can see what is happening in the classroom, as well as view samples of their children's work. Many school programs provide take-home readings and
activities for parents and children to do at home. Library books, cassettes, hands-on science activities, and journals are all examples of activities for the home.

Programs developing a relationship with parents often offer programs for parents to listen to speakers, ask questions, and discuss issues of interest. Speaker topics can include issues in child development, parenting, the family, or teaching methods. Social events for parents and families are excellent opportunities for parents and teachers to become more familiar with each other. Coffees, cookie parties, school dinners and picnics all give families a chance to enjoy their children's school. Providing comfortable furniture and a full coffee-pot encourages parents to stay at school awhile and socialize. Finally, a suggestion box encourages parents to communicate their opinions and feelings about the school. When parents are welcome in school and well-informed about their children's school experience they feel respected and better able to help their children.

Of course, more specific information is also essential for parents. Teachers and parents must communicate about individual children. Before the school year even begins teachers and parents can share information about children including details about the family, the child's interests, and health histories. Many teachers and families like home visits. Home visits provide the teacher with an opportunity to see the child in her home setting, and also give parents an opportunity to meet with teachers in perhaps a more comfortable setting.

Throughout the year communication remains critical. Daily communication between parents and teachers is best. Arrival time is an excellent time for parents to tell teachers about a restless night or a new library book their child enjoyed. At the end of the day teachers can pass along notes about a child's activities,
successes, or any issues of concern. This information gives parents an opening to discuss school with their child. Positive, happy, communication is an excellent, non-threatening way to open communication with parents. Parents want to know about their children's successes and will be more receptive if a problem situation does arise. Telephone calls, notes, and conferences all provide parents and teachers with an opportunity to discuss an individual child's development and well-being (Bundy, 1991).

Greenberg (1989) states "we've come full circle. The reason to find time to work closely with parents is that doing so helps teachers teach better, parents parent better, and children develop and learn better" (pp. 74). Collaboration between parents and teachers achieves that goal of helping children develop and learn better.

Parent Participation

Parent participation is really part of collaboration. While collaboration refers more broadly to the working relationship of parents and teachers to nurture and support children, parent participation refers specifically to the participation in school activities, meetings, classroom events, field trips and such. Peterson (1987) defines parent involvement or participation as "a process through which parents are brought into contact with (a) staff and (b) activities involving the child which are created to inform parents and facilitate parent roles with their own children" (pp. 434).

Reasons for parent participation are similar to reasons for collaboration. Parent participation in the school supports the school and its goals and most importantly supports the growth and development of children. Many early
childhood programs depend on parent participation in order to keep the school running. Parents are more than economic benefactors; they are assistants in the classroom and in the office providing service and expertise to the school as volunteers. In this way parents help keep a school running in the most basic ways. Parent participation also includes attending conferences, special events, and school gatherings. Participating in these types of events supports the spirit of the school and children. As a result of any parent participation, the school and family are brought closer together and the child benefits from the union. As with broader collaboration, parent participation in the schools nurtures the self-esteem and achievement of children (Coleman, 1991, Lancy & Nattiv, 1992, and Seely, 1984).

Peterson (1987) lists a set of goals for parent participation. Each goal remains an effort for parents and teachers to share a reciprocal relationship, interacting, communicating effectively, and facilitating each other's role as it relates to the child. The goals include:

1. Personal contact and interaction: to provide a means for achieving communication between parents and staff, among parents, and between parents and ongoing service activities.

2. Information sharing and exchange: to provide a means for ongoing interaction and sharing as a vehicle for building staff-parent rapport, camaraderie, and a sense of mutual understanding.

3. Social-emotional-personal support: to build a system of mutual cooperation between staff and parents, as well as among parents, and to create a support system parents can turn to for encouragement, understanding, counseling, and simple friendship.
4. Coordination: to create a means for staff and parents to work hand-in-hand toward the same goals so that continuity is maintained between parents and staff in education training of the young child.

5. Assistance: to provide a range of services that will facilitate parents in their roles, provide direct services to children, and aid families in ways that strengthen the overall family system.

6. Education and training: to provide information or specific training, or both, to parents (Peterson, 1987).

These goals provide a program with a foundation for parent participation programs.

Despite the need for parent participation in schools, many parents and teachers are ambivalent about parent involvement and thus, do not pursue it. Common reasons parents and teachers give for a lack of parent participation include no coordination efforts, no volunteer recruitment, teacher ambivalence about parent help, and parents confusion about their role (Lancy & Nattiv, 1992).

How can early childhood programs overcome these barriers?

A good place to begin according to Coleman (1991) is "documenting the barriers to parent involvement in your particular context created by such factors as family structures and family work schedules" (pp. 17). Once a staff knows why parents are not participating new strategies for encouraging participation can be created. For example, more options for conferences and school events to be held before and after school, in the evenings, and even on weekends might meet more families' needs. Flexibility is also essential in developing parent participation. School staffs need to allow for changing levels of participation and changing types
of participation over time. Individualizing participation is also helpful. Teachers should try to match the style and amount of participation to meet each family's and the program's needs. Finally, a variety of options for parent participation allows more parents to participate and also allows for more meaningful participation as parents choose options most suited to their skills, expertise, and schedule (Peterson, 1987).

When planning for parent participation educators should take into account the resources and the expertise of the parents. Care should be taken to offer parents a range of support, partnership, and leadership roles (Coleman, 1991). Parents are unique individuals with many and diverse talents and skills to share. Because of this, participation can and should include a variety of roles for parents. Peterson (1987) suggests a broad list of roles for parents including observer, audience, provider of service and information, decision maker, policy maker and advisor, advocates, disseminators, and fund raisers, counselors, friends and supporters, and volunteers, aides or assistants.

Parents as observers do just that, they observe. Parents have an opportunity to observe their child in a school setting and also to observe the teachers in their professional roles. While this participation does not involve direct interaction between parent and teacher or parent and child it can be a very helpful experience for parents. Parents can see for themselves how their child relates with other adults and children. Parents also absorb techniques of the teacher whether they be discipline techniques or communication techniques or more direct teaching methods (Peterson, 1987).
Parents as an audience can imply many different roles. Parents attending meetings about parenting or child development receive important information to help them work with their children. When planning speaker series, topics should relate both to classroom and family environments (Coleman, 1991). Parents might also be an audience for a program in which children perform or participate. Parental pleasure at seeing their child perform is convincing enough that this kind of activity is a source of encouragement and reinforcement for parents (Peterson, 1987).

As providers of services and information parents work with staff to plan schedules for their children, provide transportation to and from school if needed, and provide materials and personal items the staff needs for the child. Often this role is not seen as participation, but if parents ignore this role, teachers often become impatient and feel the parent is not upholding their part of the relationship (Peterson, 1987).

Participation as decision makers and team members is a very empowering role for parents. This role allows parents to help make decisions about their child's individual learning program and development. Conferences between staff and parents provides an opportunity for mutual assessment and goal setting for a child. Parents can also help design a program for meeting those goals and reinforce it in the home. Teachers can encourage parent participation in conferences by planning ahead for conferences and informing parents early about the frequency of conferences. Making conferences comfortable for parents can be achieved by allowing plenty of time for discussion, having available a variety of projects that the child worked on, beginning and ending a conference with positive notes about
a child, communicating in a manner that shows respect for a parent, asking parents to share their feelings and suggestions, and maintaining eye-contact and interest (Coleman, 1991).

Parents can also fill a role as a policy maker or advisor. Many early childhood programs have parents as members of the board. As Peterson (1987) suggests "it places parents in a position of great responsibility as they become involved in the operational issues related to management, funding, policy, program philosophy, and content of services offered" (pp. 437).

Parents play an invaluable role creating support for early childhood programs as they act as advocates, disseminators of information, and fund raisers. Parents can share information about a program with friends, neighbors, legislators, and other local officials in an effort to widen support for and knowledge about a program. Fund raising is critical for early childhood programs because they are not mandated and often have no tax base. Local support of programs is essential and parents play a pivotal role in raising money (Peterson, 1987).

In programs that provide opportunities for friendship and interaction among parents, support systems among families form almost automatically. Parents who come to know each other at coffees, cookie parties, or through welcoming committees can form friendships, form carpools, and provide baby-sitting for each other. Parents can form their own networks of communication.

Most early childhood programs are desperate for extra manpower in the office, the classroom, or other areas of the school. Parent volunteers provide excellent service to the school at no cost. Parents also have the opportunity to share their special skills and expertise. Parent volunteers need to be recruited early
in the year before school starts. A survey of volunteer interests and skills can help determine individual parent roles. Orientation meetings allow parents an opportunity to see where materials are kept, who they will work with, and what they will be expected to do. Clear, specific instructions about the roles of volunteers puts volunteers at ease (Knowler, 1988 and Peterson, 1987).

Lancy and Nattiv (1992) studied a parent volunteer reading program in a Utah elementary school and found that parents and teachers alike attributed its success to solid recruitment efforts and training of volunteers. Before this reading program was established parent volunteers in this school felt useless and confused about their roles. Through several planning sessions teachers and parents developed a volunteer program based on reading to young children. The school purchased many new books and a love seat for each classroom. A coordinator recruited volunteers and organized several informal orientation meetings. Once volunteers were identified they were trained in effective read-aloud strategies. Volunteers learned to listen to children's questions, discuss pictures, ask questions as they read, and to relate stories to the children's own experiences. After one school year the program was considered a huge success. Forty-five volunteers faithfully came and read with children. On rare occasions when volunteers could not attend, they found their own substitute readers. Parent volunteers felt that they were providing an appropriate service. Children loved the time spent with volunteers and willingly gave up time at games or parties to hear a story. Volunteers and teachers alike expressed great satisfaction with the new program.

Parents can and do wear many different hats as they participate in their child's early childhood program. Flexibility in allowing parents to try different roles
and to participate in any way that they can encourages participation. Providing diverse opportunities for participation assures that each parent can find some role they are comfortable with. Finally, communicating regularly with parents about different roles and expectations assures that parent participation is meaningful and positive. Strong parent participation means a strong school and happy children.

**Characteristics of the Reggio Emilia Early Childhood Program**

The Reggio Emilia early childhood programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy offer many of the elements beneficial to early childhood programs. To understand the philosophy of education in Reggio, one must understand the rich history of the schools in Reggio. Just days after the end of World War II, a committed group of parents in Reggio Emilia decided to build and run a school for the young children in the area. Built from bricks and beams salvaged from bombed ruins the first school opened with Loris Malaguzzi as its first teacher. Malaguzzi, working with the parents and children in these schools had an epiphany: that things about and for children are only learned from children (Malaguzzi, 1993). Malaguzzi throughout his whole life and career as an educator, investigated and supported this belief that children are knowledgeable and powerful resources. This philosophy that children are rich, strong, and capable is the foundation of the schools in Reggio.

Educators in Reggio Emilia speak first and foremost about the image they have of the child. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, in engaging in social interaction, and negotiating with everything the environment brings to them (Gandini, 1993). Children are believed in and taken seriously. Beyond this, educators in Reggio believe that children have rights; children have a right to care and education, a right to think
and make choices, a right to speak and be heard. In Reggio children's potential and rights are emphasized, not their weaknesses and needs (Benham, 1992).

In Reggio, education of children focuses on each individual child in relation to other children, to the family, to teachers, to the environment, and even to the community. School is viewed as a system in which all of these relationships are activated and supported. Because teachers stay with the same group of children for three years, teachers, children, and parents come to know each other very well and are allowed to develop relationships that are rich and meaningful (Gandini, 1993).

Teachers in Reggio are very aware of children's potential and work to create an environment that encourages children's development. The physical use of space in Reggio promotes interaction, communication, and relationships. According to Gandini (1993) "the arrangement of structures, objects, and activities encourages choices, problem solving, and discoveries in the process of learning" (pp. 6). Teachers try to arrange space so that children have opportunities to work with teachers, other children, in team dyads, and even alone. Each year children, with their teachers, change environments because their developmental needs and interests change.

Teachers and children plan each day together rather than follow a set routine. Children's sense of time and rhythm are considered during planning and many observers in Reggio have remarked that the pace seems leisurely. Children always have enough time to finish projects and activities (Benham, 1992).

The curriculum in Reggio reflects the image of the child and reflects the relationship developed between children and teachers. The curriculum is not established in advance, rather it emerges throughout the school year in response to
children's and teachers' interests. Teachers do establish general goals and make hypotheses about what direction the curriculum might take, and they make appropriate preparations. However, flexibility is a necessity in Reggio. As the curriculum emerges in the process of an activity or a project, teachers are prepared to change direction if they must. Teachers listen very carefully to the children; they listen to what children say and ask as they work and play. Teachers ask children questions and challenge them to determine the next step in the process. In this way teachers and children co-plan the curriculum as children's interests and curiosities lead teachers to provide particular experiences (Benham, 1992 and Gandini, 1993).

Projects and themes provide children and teachers an opportunity to explore an interest further and in depth. Projects may start from a chance event, an idea or problem posed by one or more children, or an experience initiated directly by teachers. For example, a study of crowds originated when a child told the class about a summer vacation experience. Children then explored crowds, going out to the town plaza at mid-day, looked at pictures, and related personal experiences. Children recreated crowds with paint, clay, and other mediums. Throughout all of these activities the children were challenged to problem solve and cooperate. Projects can last a few days or for several months (Gandini, 1993).

Creativity and problem solving skills are nurtured in children through the exploration of many materials and mediums. Children are encouraged to use paint, clay, wire, puppets, blocks, role playing, shadows, and anything else they can think of to extend a project. Teachers in Reggio believe that children's expressions through diverse mediums are inseparable from the whole cognitive/symbolic expression in the process of learning (Gandini, 1993).
Forman (1993) suggests throughout the school year teachers should document every project. Transcripts of children's discussions and remarks, photos, and representations of their thinking through diverse mediums are arranged and displayed throughout the school. Documentation tells a story. Parents can "read" this story and understand what their children have been doing and learning. Teachers "read" the story and plan appropriate next steps. Children "read" the story and ask more questions, rethink their activities, and delight in seeing their own work valued by adults.

Because children are so cherished in Reggio, it follows that families are cherished. Teachers in Reggio understand children in relation to others and in particular, in relation to the family. Because so many of the children's experiences and interests stem from their experiences outside of school, an intense effort is made to know and understand every child's experiences outside of school. Family experiences are integrated thoroughly in the Reggio classroom.

From its beginnings the schools in Reggio have depended upon parent support and participation (Spaggiari, 1993). After World War II it was a group of parents who built the first school for young children. From the rubble of bombed buildings these parents built the first school with their own hands. Parent collaboration and participation is more than a system of running schools in Reggio, it is a philosophy. Parent collaboration is necessary because education is a shared responsibility of schools and parents.

Spaggiari (1993) further states that parent participation in Reggio exists at all levels. At the highest levels parents work with teachers, and other community members to administer the schools. Every two years parents, teachers, and other
community members elect amongst themselves representatives to serve on Advisory Councils. There is one Advisory Council for every infant-toddler center and preprimary school in Reggio. Several representatives from each Advisory Council are then sent as representatives to the Municipal Board on Infant-Toddler and Preprimary Education. Recent studies have shown that 66% of parents vote in these elections and that 1 out of 3 families has participated on one of these boards.

These councils perform many services. Council members draw up agendas and budgets, process parental concerns and proposals, and generally administer the schools. Different committees with specific goals are formed. A committee might meet to study and implement strategies to maximize parent participation, repaint the dining room of a school, or offer a discussion on children's sleep habits. The goals are varied but they all support children, the family, the school, and thus, the community.

As well as serving on councils and committees, parents participate in a variety of ways in the classroom and school building. According to Malaguzzi (1993) in order to achieve teacher/parent collaboration it is necessary to provide children, parents, and teachers with many different opportunities for interaction. A list and description of main opportunities for participation throughout the school year follows:

1. Meetings at the individual classroom level: Classroom teachers meet with parents to discuss such things as the happenings within that particular group of children, examples of children's work, and the assessment of the learning experiences. Agendas and dates should be set well in advance and
parents should be notified well in advance. Usually this type of meeting occurs 5 or 6 times a year.

2. Small group meetings: Teachers meet with a small group of parents from their class. The smaller group allows for more personalized discussion about the needs of particular families and children. Usually each family has an opportunity to participate in at least one of these types of meeting.

3. Individual parent/teacher conferences: These are requested either by the teachers or the parents and can deal with specific problems related to a child or family or with the development of the child.

4. Meetings around a theme: These meetings are initiated and led by parents and teachers and are open to anyone in the community. These meetings discuss particular themes such as the role of the father or children's fears. Topics are debated by everyone present.

5. Encounters with an expert: These encounters take the form of a lecture. The encounters are developed to increase everyone's knowledge of problems of common interest. Examples of problems explored might be sexuality, children's diet, or books for young children.

6. Work sessions: Work sessions are opportunities to contribute to the physical improvement of the school. Parents and teachers build furniture, paint, and maintain the schoolyard.

7. Labs: Labs are opportunities to learn new skills by actually doing that skill. For example, parents and teachers might learn to fold origami, make puppets, or cook.

8. Holidays and celebrations: These activities are open to children, parents,
grandparents, friends, and townspeople. Celebrated events might include children's birthdays, a grandparent's visit, the end of the year, or seasonal celebrations.

9. Other meeting possibilities: Trips into town, picnics, excursions, short holidays at the seaside or mountains, staying in the city-owned hostels are all possible activities to bring parents, teachers, and children together.

Parent participation is supported by this rich network of meetings and the meetings include two critical elements: (a) a diversity of activities which meet the various interests, needs, and aspirations of different families; and (b) a focus on the classroom as the natural place of encounter for those who are interested in the educational experience of the school, and the starting point to becoming involved in the wider life of the community (Spaggiari, 1993).

Characteristics of American Programs Adapting the Reggio Approach

There are few early childhood programs and schools in the U.S. that are adapting the Reggio approach and those that are often are lab schools connected with universities or federal projects. However, as the word about Reggio spreads, more and more programs are working to adapt the Reggio principles and integrate the Reggio philosophy into their programs.

One such program is the Human Development Laboratory School, a primary training site for early childhood teachers at the University of Massachusetts School of Education. In developing their program for two and three year olds, teachers at the school reconsidered their image of the child and their curriculum. Teachers already believed that children are strong and resourceful, but they felt that they could better arrange the environment and curriculum to support
this belief (LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993). Teachers began to work to establish relationships and make connections with children and the environment, children with outside experiences, children with other children, and children with teachers.

In an effort to help children connect with their environment teachers tried all sorts of things. The teachers hid photos of different children in the sand table, under blocks, and in playdough. As the children found the photos they delightfully discussed the location, the peers in the photos, and why it was there.

Connecting children's home experiences with school experiences also became a focus for teachers (LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993). Teachers noticed that children were not only interested in each other but in other mothers and fathers. At arrival and departure times there was an abundance of discussion about which parents belonged to which children. As a result, teachers decided to videotape parents dropping off and picking up their children. The videotape was replayed repeatedly for children to discuss and identify who was who. This experience led into an entire project called the Looking at Each Other project.

According to LeeKennan and Nimmo (1993) "providing opportunities for peer feedback, sharing, and discussion are important ways to build ideas as well as a way to build community in a group" (pp. 263). Collaborative projects like murals provide children with excellent opportunities for sharing materials, discussing the way a project will look, and problem solving. Sharing individual projects with each other gives children a chance to express personal feelings and emotions within a group.

Children in the classroom also relate to the teachers. Young children are very interested in their teachers' lives and they love to know what teachers do at
home, what they eat, whether they have pets or children, and so on. Therefore, teachers' interests are as important as children's interests. As long as teachers do not impose their interests on children, they should share photos and experiences about their life outside school.

The Model Early Learning Center in Washington DC. was conceived as a school adapting the Reggio approach. After much study of Reggio, a portion of a children's museum in Washington DC. was renovated into classrooms. The school has 36 children ranging in age from 3 to 6. There are 5 teachers and a consultant who work as a team. The children attend school from 8:50 to 2:45 five days a week.

The Model Early Learning Center accepts students in need. As a result, all of the students come from low-income families and qualify for many assistance programs. The program is challenged in adapting the Reggio philosophy in such a vastly different cultural context, however, teachers have committed themselves to encouraging parent participation and providing as many opportunities for participation as possible (Gambetti, 1995).

Each day parents enter the school building as they drop off their children. There is an official greeter at the entrance to chat with children and parents as they arrive. Having a greeter provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss any immediate concerns for the day. Parents are also invited to eat breakfast with their children. They can also eat lunch and snack with their kids if they like. Eating together creates an instant feeling of fellowship for teachers, parents, and children. Parents are invited to plan and attend birthday celebrations, holiday celebrations, and other special events. One of the favorite school
celebrations is a Thanksgiving dinner that teachers and families share together. This is an excellent example of how the Reggio program fosters collaborative efforts.

Parents also have opportunities to meet with teachers on a monthly basis. Every month a parent meeting is held to discuss class activities. Individual parent/teacher conferences are held periodically to discuss children's development. Special parent committees have developed over time as parents feel more comfortable in their roles as school leaders. Committees plan discussions on topics such as literacy, drugs, and nutrition. All in all teachers at the Model Early Learning Center try to provide 60-70 opportunities per school year for parents to be active in school events and decisions. The diverse opportunities attempt to meet each family's needs and interests. While parent participation was often a unique concept for many parents, the parents felt such respect and validation from teachers, that they have embraced the concept. As a result, parent participation was high in this program.

The Overfield Early Childhood Program in Troy, Ohio has been adapting the principles of Reggio for several years in an effort to further strengthen and enrich its program for 3-6 year olds. A primary goal of the staff is to constantly rethink and reshape the school philosophy about children. As the philosophy evolves, there are certain critical beliefs about children that remain constant. Overfield teachers believe children are strong and resourceful. Teachers believe that children learn best with practical, hands-on experiences. Teachers believe that children have a right to a safe, nurturing learning environment.
While Overfield has always had a commitment to implement developmentally appropriate practices, the manner in which the curriculum develops has changed since the staff has worked to refine its image of the child. Overfield teachers now allow the curriculum to emerge and develop from the children's ideas, interests, and activities. Teachers listen carefully to children and with the children's help they determine what to do next. As a result, project work is becoming more evident at Overfield.

Short projects lasting only a week or two might explore spiders or pets. Around Valentine's Day the children showed an interest in letters and mailboxes so teachers supported children in an investigation of mail. Long projects lasting a month or longer are becoming more common, as well. For instance, a class of 3-4 year olds spent several weeks building castles in the block area and tying tablecloths and blankets from housekeeping about their necks like capes. After watching and listening to the children's play, teachers decided to introduce some literature about castles. Soon an extensive project on castles was in progress. As other classes, including the kindergarten, saw the construction of a cardboard castle and a dragon, they began to explore the theme, as well. Children had opportunities to investigate this theme through language, music, clay, blocks, dramatic play, storytelling, and a variety of other medium.

As well as adapting the Reggio principles of developing an image of the child and supporting an emergent curriculum, the Overfield staff has been working to strengthen parent collaboration and participation. Overfield has always had a strong tradition of parent participation. Parents have always volunteered their time, supported school functions, and organized and run a major fundraising Spring
Festival. However, what is changing at Overfield is the understanding of parent and teacher roles. Teachers are no longer considered the experts that parents come to help. Now teachers and parents alike are considered experts and work together to support children's growth and learning. Efforts are being made to have parent volunteers share more of their wisdom and expertise in the classroom, office, and gym. Efforts are being made to have parents share their knowledge at parent meetings and coffees. The Overfield staff wants parents to feel ownership in the program. In order to develop parent interest and participation, the staff has developed many more opportunities for parents to participate. Recent additions to the school calendar include parent meetings throughout the year, parent coffees, family celebrations such as The Night Tree, Family Carry-In Dinner, and Spring Festival. Many activities are scheduled for evenings and weekends to accommodate working parents.

While Overfield has experienced many changes in the past several years as staff develops an understanding of Reggio and how its principles best work for a program in Troy, Ohio, there is a continued effort to provide children with the best possible learning environment and experiences. These and other programs across the nation are working very hard to adapt the Reggio approach. They share some common beliefs: that children are strong and capable, that parents are partners in the learning process, and that teachers, parents, and children learn from each other.
CHAPTER III
METODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods that were used to conduct this study. The topics discussed are: subjects, setting, and procedure.

Subjects

Parents of approximately 80 three and four year old children enrolled in the Overfield Early Childhood Program were involved in this study. Of these 80 families, approximately 14 families participated in extended care as well as class programs. Eleven full-time and 4 part-time staff members were also included in this study. Staff members included classroom teachers, extended care teachers, specialist teachers, a secretary, and the director.

Setting

School. Overfield Early Childhood Program was a not for profit, private preschool and kindergarten program in Troy, Ohio. There were approximately 160 students enrolled at the school. The school offered a kindergarten program, a program for four and five year old children, and a program for three and four year old children. Enrollment numbers were as follows: 13 children were enrolled in a morning kindergarten program, approximately 70 students attended a program for four and five year olds, and approximately 80 children attended the program for three and four year olds. There were 14 staff members including: 8 classroom teachers, 2 specialist teachers, 2 extended care teachers, 1 secretary, and the school director. There were four class options, each 2 hours and 45 minutes, for three and four year old children. There were three class options, each 2 hours and
45 minutes, for four and five year old children. There was a kindergarten program available in the mornings for 2 hours and 45 minutes. Extended care was available from 7:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. for children enrolled in class programs.

Community. Troy, Ohio was a town of 20,000 people approximately 20 miles due north of Dayton, Ohio. It was a community that still had some farming economy, but truly developed as an industrial town at the turn of the century. There were several large industries in town that employed a large percentage of the town's population. As a result, the community was varied economically as there were both opportunities for blue collar labor and white collar management. While the socio-economic profile of Troy was diverse, the town was predominately white and Christian.

While the population of Troy was economically varied, the population of parents at Overfield were predominately white, Christian, middle to upper class professionals. Typically, families at Overfield are two parent families. About 10% of the school population represent single-parent families. Families with two working parents include 50% of the Overfield population.

Procedure

At Overfield there were programs available for three and four year olds, four and five year olds, and kindergartners. Extended child care was also available for any child enrolled in the school program. Each pre-school class had 21-25 children and 3 teachers who taught as a team. The kindergarten class had 13 students and 1 classroom teacher. A typical day included:

Circle Time (8:30-8:50): a time for the entire class to share songs, books, news, and the day's events.
Small Group Time (8:50-9:15): a time for small groups of children to work with 1 teacher on a specific project.

Activity Time (9:15-10:15): a time to choose art, block building, science, math, dramatic play, or manipulatives. Children were free to choose and move freely between activities.

Snack (available during activity time): a snack was offered daily and provided an opportunity for learning nutrition, hand washing skills, and social skills.

Outdoor Play (10:15-11:00): a time to play outside (or inside if the weather demanded) and to develop gross motor skills.

Closure (11:00-11:15): a time to review the day and dismiss students.

The curriculum was developed considering developmentally appropriate practices and whole language strategies. An art teacher and a gym teacher shared their time between classes, developing activities and experiences that complemented and strengthened the projects and learning of each class. Overfield, in 1991, identified and began adapting the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

At the end of the 1993-1994 school year the Overfield staff met as a group to review the year and to set goals for the coming 1994-1995 school year. Discussion often focused on the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and what Overfield could do to adapt further the Reggio philosophy and principles. Three goals were set for the 1994-1995 school year:
1. Documentation: To continue working on documenting and displaying children's work and to use documentation as a tool for planning and evaluating children's learning.

2. Teacher collaboration: To continue to collaborate as teaching teams to plan, implement, document, and evaluate curriculum.

3. Parent-Teacher Collaboration: To continue developing relationships with parents in an effort to increase parent interest, support of, and participation in the school program.

This third goal was the starting point for this study.

As parents enrolled their children for the 1994-1995 school year a parent resource questionnaire was sent home with other paperwork including medical forms and applications (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was developed by staff members. The resource questionnaire asked parents if they were willing to volunteer in the school, and if so what types of skills, talents, and expertise they could offer. A checklist offered choices of volunteering in the classroom, office, or gym. Skills listed included baking, sewing, painting, gardening, typing, storytelling, music, or any other skill or interest that the children and school would enjoy.

The staff enlisted the help of a parent to review all of the resource questionnaires, find names of volunteers, and set up a schedule of volunteers for the entire school year. The parent who volunteered to organize parents was a woman trained in organizing and developing volunteer programs in schools, churches, and other civic organizations. For the first two weeks of the school year she called every parent who volunteered to help in the school and developed a schedule of days that each parent could work throughout the school year. While
some parents volunteered weekly, others volunteered to help only one day of the year. Efforts were made to include any parent who volunteered to work. A schedule of classroom volunteers was then given to all of the classroom teachers, a schedule of office volunteers was given to the office, and a schedule of gym volunteers was given to the gym teacher. Each parent volunteer was also sent a copy of the schedule.

At the beginning of the school year the teachers of the three and four year olds also reviewed the completed parent resource questionnaires and compiled a master list of volunteer names and skills. This master list was filed for use throughout the school year in conjunction with the volunteer schedule. If a particular project or activity required special skills or expertise, teachers contacted parents from this list to schedule special times to help in the school.

Throughout the year the experimenter kept a record of the number of volunteer hours spent in the classroom. The experimenter used a log sheet provided by the parent coordinator of volunteers to keep this record. The volunteer name and hours volunteered in the classroom per month were tallied on this volunteer activity log. Each day the experimenter filled out the log as necessary. If a parent could not help but notified the school this was noted with a code, ENS (excused no show). If a parent did not come and did not notify the school it was so noted, NS (no show and no phone call). At the end of each month the hours of volunteers was totaled. At the end of the school year the monthly totals were totaled for a final number of hours volunteered. This log was kept from September 1994 through May 1995. The volunteer activity log accounted only for volunteer time spent in the classroom (see Appendix B).
Throughout the school year the Overfield staff continued to encourage parent participation and worked to provide a variety of opportunities for parent participation. In September each class had a parent's orientation night held in the evening. At this meeting general information about the school program was reviewed and specific information about the class was discussed. This initial meeting had almost 100% attendance. Parent meetings were also held in October, January, and April. These meetings did not have agendas beyond discussing parent concerns and questions, and attendance was not as high as attendance of the initial meeting. However, attendance was good and usually at least 50% of a group of parents was represented. Parents were encouraged to tour the classrooms and to observe what projects were in progress. Parents were also encouraged to suggest field trips, resource people, and activities that their children might enjoy. Parent-teacher conferences were held in November and again in March. The conferences in November had 100% attendance and the conferences in March had 95% attendance. Other conferences were scheduled by parents or teachers as needed. These conferences provided parents and teachers an opportunity to discuss individual children's development.

In December, after reading The Night Tree by Eve Bunting children worked to make decorations for the trees around school. These decorations would feed the wildlife in the area. As a culmination of this work the school held a Night Tree Celebration. Every school family was invited to come to school in the evening and hear The Night Tree story, hang decorations outside, and socialize over cookies and juice. Attendance ran at about 80%. Another family event was arranged in February. A family carry-in dinner was held in the evening and each
family brought a dish to share with the group. After enjoying dinner with family and friends a puppet show was performed by two professional puppeteers. Approximately 60% of the families were at this event.

Parents also organized events for families to participate in school life. The Saturday Series was a group of 4 performances featuring puppets, dance, ballet, and music. These performances were scheduled for 4 Saturday mornings or afternoons throughout the school year during the months of December, January, February, and March. Parents also organized the annual Spring Festival which is a major fundraising activity for the school. Committees of parents worked to provide games, food, gifts, and pony rides to the public. The Spring Fair was held on a Saturday in May.

The school director organized 3 parent "Coffee and Conversation" programs. This was a new effort on the school's part to get parents together and offer some parent education on child development. The coffees were scheduled during school hours and additional child care was made available for siblings who were not enrolled at Overfield. The coffees covered such topics as Reggio Emilia, children and television, and children's literature. For instance, the November coffee topic was "The Effects of Television on Children".

Beyond these organized types of events for parents and families to participate in school life, teachers encouraged parent participation generally by opening the classroom to any parent any day that they wished to visit. Field trips were excellent events to include parents as the school depended on parents as drivers. Field trips included trips to a local apple orchard, Bruckner Nature Center, and the homes and farms of various students.
In May the experimenter began conducting phone interviews with parents in order to determine parent attitudes about participating in school life. The experimenter called parents in the evenings and on the weekends for the first two weeks of May. A list of questions was developed by the experimenter (see Appendix C). Generally, responses indicated that parents were pleased with their opportunities and experiences participating at Overfield. For instance, one parent stated that evening events provided an excellent opportunity for working parents to meet with teachers and observe their children's work. Another parent stressed how she had come to truly understand the school philosophy through her experiences volunteering. One working parent suggested that Coffee and Conversation be offered in the evening so working parents could attend, as well. Parents who were interviewed seemed comfortable and eager to respond.

On May 8, 1995 the experimenter sent home a parent participation survey to all the parents of three and four year old children (see Appendix D). Initially the survey was to be returned on May 19, 1995, but because of slow feedback the experimenter extended the due date to May 26, 1995. Only half of the surveys were returned. Parents who did not return the survey may have felt that they already provided this information through the phone interview. Other parents may have been overwhelmed by the paperwork going home at the end of the year. With final newsletters, information about the following school year, and paperwork for summer camp, parents might not have had the time to fill out a survey. During this time period a survey was also given to each staff member (see Appendix E). These surveys and interviews along with the volunteer log were used to determine the amount of and feelings about parent participation at Overfield.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of calculating total volunteer hours spent in the classroom, the results of the interviews with Overfield parents, the results of the parent attitude surveys, and the results of the staff attitude surveys. The data is presented in the following way:

1. A tally of demographic features across parent participants is presented.
2. The monthly totals of completed volunteer hours in the classroom, the number of excused no shows, and the number of no shows is presented. Monthly totals are added to find final totals for the 1994-1995 school year.
3. A comparison of the number of volunteers in three different volunteer settings, and a comparison of number of women and men volunteers is graphed.
4. A percentage of responses to a parent attitude survey appears.
5. Representative comments from a parent attitude survey are listed.
6. Representative comments from parent interviews are presented.
7. Demographic features across the staff population are tallied.
8. Representative comments from a staff attitude survey are shared.
Demographics Across Parent Participants.

Table 1 shows a demographic breakdown of the parent population that responded to the parent attitude survey. Demographic features presented include gender, age, marital status, employment, and the employment of a spouse. Thirty-seven respondents were women, 3 were men. In the age range of 20-29 there were 2 respondents. From 30-39 there were 30 respondents. From 40-49 there were 7 respondents, and in the range 50+ there was 1 respondent. Twenty-eight respondents work outside of the home, and of those 28, 14 work full-time and 14 work part-time. Thirty-four respondents indicated that their spouse worked outside of the home, and all of those 34 spouses work full-time.

Monthly Totals of Classroom Volunteer Hours.

Table 2 shows how many volunteer hours were completed each month, how many excused no shows were recorded each month, and how many no shows occurred each month. The total number of completed volunteer hours in October was 63.25, in November 63.25, in December 49.5, in January 63.25, in February 50.5, in March 71.5, in April 44, and in May 8.25. The total number of completed volunteer hours for the 1994-1995 school year was 413.5. The total number of excused no shows in October was 3, in November 0, in December 3, in January 5, in February 1, in March 3, in April 4, and in May 1. The total number of excused no shows for the 1994-1995 school year was 20. The total number of no shows in October was 2, in November 0, in December 1, in January 1, in February 2, in March 3, in April 3, and in May 2. The total number of no shows for the 1994-1995 school year was 14.
Volunteer Participation Across Settings and Gender.

Figure 1 illustrates the percentages of classroom volunteers, gym volunteers, and office volunteers by gender. Classroom volunteers were most common as 53% of the women and 2% of the men volunteered in this setting. In the gym, 20% of the women volunteered and 2% of the men. The office had 13% women volunteers and no men.

Representative Responses to Attitude Survey.

Table 3 shows the percentages of respondents who answered yes to a series of questions on the parent attitude survey. Fifty percent have children enrolled at schools other than Overfield. Seventy-five percent attended at least one class field trip. One hundred percent of the parents participated in parent-teacher conferences. Eighty percent attended at least one parent meeting. Fifty-eight percent attended the family carry-in dinner, 80% attended The Night Tree celebration, 78% attended the Spring Festival, and 50% attended at least one Saturday Series performance. When asked if they felt Overfield provided appropriate opportunities for parent involvement, 100% answered yes. Ninety-three percent felt that the scheduling of school meetings and events generally met their families needs.

Representative Comments to Parent Attitude Survey.

Table 4 lists representative comments from the parent attitude survey. When asked to comment on the strengths of parent participation at Overfield parents gave a variety and range of responses. Sample responses include the following: (a) participation builds communication between parents and teachers, (b) parent participation establishes and helps develop familiar, friendly relationships
between parents and teachers; we work together, (c) it helps the child feel more comfortable at school, (d) parents can observe a teacher’s style and interaction with children, and (e) participation shows interest in one’s children and school. When asked to comment on the weaknesses of parent participation at Overfield parents offered these type of responses: (a) often classroom volunteers were unsure of their role and wanted more guidance, (b) it is very difficult for working parents to be involved, (c) parents with younger children at home need child-care during volunteer times, (d) teachers are afraid of offending parents, and (e) more dads volunteering in school would be great.

Representative Comments to the Parent Interview.

Table 5 lists the representative comments from parent interviews. When asked about their favorite experience participating in a school activity, parents gave a variety of responses such as: (a) field trips, (b) sledding with children, (c) working on the Spring Festival committee, (d) the holiday Book Fair, and (e) walking to the pond to see the toads and toad eggs. Parents commented on their least favorite experiences in this way: (a) often classroom volunteers felt lost and useless, (b) evening events started too early for working parents, (c) using car seats on field trips was too much work, (d) the school birthday snack policy, and (e) washing dishes.

Demographics Across the Staff Participants.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the staff by gender, job position, and full-time or part-time employment. The staff is all women. Of the 6 respondents 3 were classroom teachers, 1 was a director, 1 was a specialist teacher, and 1 was a childcare teacher. Four worked full-time and 2 worked part-time.
Representative Comments to Staff Attitude Survey.

Table 7 lists the representative comments of the staff survey. When asked to comment on the strengths of parent participation at Overfield, the staff gave a range of answers including these: (a) there are many opportunities for parents to participate and many choose to participate, (b) parents are very supportive of the school and often spearhead projects on their own to help teachers, and (c) the parents have skills and expertise that the school needs. When asked about the weaknesses of parent participation, the staff answered like this (a) at times the parents feel lost in the classroom and it is hard to direct them when the children need you, (b) parent volunteers often do not want to do what is needed and ignore teacher requests, and (c) parents often believe that the school should meet their every need, but in reality we are trying to meet the needs of many families.
### Table 1

Demographics Across Parent Participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Marital Status</th>
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<th>Spouse’s Employment</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
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**Note.** Age: 20-29 = 1, 30-39 = 2, 40-49 = 3, 50+ = 4.

Marital Status: Married = 1, Divorced = 2, Widowed = 3, Single = 4.

Employment: Full-time = F, Part-time = P, Not Employed = N.
Table 2

Monthly Totals of Classroom Volunteer Hours

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<td>CVH</td>
<td>63.25</td>
<td>63.25</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>63.25</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of CVH = 413.5
Total Number of ENS = 20
Total Number of NS = 14

Note. CVH = Completed Volunteer Hours, ENS = Excused No Show, NS = No Show
Figure 1

Volunteer Participation Across Settings and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office</td>
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### Table 3

**Representative Responses to Parent Attitude Surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Children enrolled other school</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Participation in field trips</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Participation in conferences</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Participation in meetings</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Participation in carry-in dinner</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Participation in Night Tree</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Participation in Saturday Series</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Participation in Spring Festival</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. OECP provides appropriate opportunities for participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Scheduled events meet family needs</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
Representative Comments to Parent Survey

1. Please list and comment on the strengths of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

- A. Participation builds communication between parents and teachers
- B. Parent participation establishes and helps develop familiar, friendly relationships between parents and teachers; we work together
- C. There are so many opportunities to participate
- D. Many of the opportunities accommodate working parents
- E. Children love to have parents sharing in their experiences

2. Please list and comment on the weaknesses of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

- A. Often classroom volunteers were unsure of their role and wanted more guidance
- B. It is very difficult for working parents to be involved
- C. Parents need more opportunities to be involved in school policy-making
- D. Children often have a difficult time when their parents are in the classroom
- E. Evening activities are scheduled too late for families with young children
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Table 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Representative Comments to Parent Interview</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. What was your favorite experience participating in school life this year?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Field trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Sledding with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. The family events like The Night Tree and carry-in dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Helping with stations in the gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Walking to the pond to see the toads and the toad eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. What was your least favorite experience participating in school life this year?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Often classroom volunteers felt lost and useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Evening events started too early for working parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Evening events started too late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Coffee &amp; Conversation was not available to the working parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Children often misbehaved when their parent was in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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</table>

**Note.** Position: classroom teacher = 1, specialist = 2, child-care teacher = 3, director = 4, secretary = 5. Employment: full-time = F, part-time = P.
Table 7

Representative Comments to Staff Attitude Survey

1. Please list and comment on the strengths of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

   A. There are many opportunities for parent to participate and many choose to participate
   B. Parents are very supportive of the school and often spearhead projects on their own to help teachers
   C. A sense of community exists; parents and teachers can talk and work together

2. Please list and comment on the weaknesses of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

   A. At times parents feel lost in the classroom and it is hard to direct them when the children need you
   B. Children often struggle when their parent is in the classroom
   C. Parent volunteers are not being used in enough areas; we should use them in art, outside, and to do maintenance
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This study clearly supports that the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education provides many benefits to children, teachers, and parents. Gambetti (1995) suggested that programs adapting the Reggio approach should try to create as many opportunities as possible for parents to be involved in school life. Most importantly these opportunities should be diverse and reflect the interests and needs of families. When many opportunities for participation are available it seems that parents do participate and feel that teachers truly respect them and their children.

The results of this study convincingly show that a variety of opportunities for parents to share in school experiences leads to a high rate of parent participation. Volunteer hours totaling 413.5 hours, 100% participation in parent-teacher conferences, and over 50% attendance at every other school meeting or event indicates that parent participation is high when efforts are made to develop opportunities for parents.

LeeKeenan and Nimmo (1993) discussed the importance of sharing family experiences in school and vice versa. Linking home and school led to higher self-esteem among children, built an avenue of communication for teachers and parents, and helped to create a sense of community for school families. The results of this study support these claims. Parent comments about parent participation voiced an appreciation for sharing familiar, open relationships with teachers, opportunities for working parents, and the joy their children expressed when mom or dad participated in some way.
Staff members also expressed high satisfaction with parent participation. Staff was thankful for the help and support of parents in the classroom, office, and gym, and acknowledged that many school activities could not occur without parent help. The great attendance numbers at conferences, meetings, and other school events encouraged staff. The staff felt that parent participation nurtured an important sense of community and partnership in the education of children.

The results of this study clearly show that in a program adapting the Reggio approach parent participation can be greatly increased and improved. Parents in this study indicated that every parent was able to participate in some manner and that they were pleased with the efforts to include parents. The attitudes of parents and staff alike were very positive and indicated an appreciation for the relationship developed between home and school. Parents and teachers alike felt they were partners in the growth and development of children.

The study benefited from very a cooperative and enthusiastic parent population. Parents were very willing to answer interview questions and completed the attitude surveys very thoroughly. The number of additional comments was tremendous and many parents indicated that they felt this study could be very useful in improving parent participation at Overfield. The staff responses were also very thorough and thoughtful. The experimenter feels certain that all interview and survey responses were honest.

Using the entire school year to develop this study was also helpful. The results of the study are strengthened by the fact that volunteer hours were logged all year and that parents had an entire year’s experience on which to reflect. A shorter time period of study may not have given as accurate results.
It is also of importance that Overfield already had a strong tradition of parent participation in place. The experimenter was able to use a parent resource questionnaire and volunteer log that was already in use, and many of the opportunities for parent involvement were familiar to staff and parents. The addition of several new opportunities such as more parent meetings, Coffee & Conversation, and an organized effort to recruit and orient volunteers provided a benchmark to see how parent participation might increase and improve.

There were several limitations to the study. The low number of both parent and staff surveys returned is noted. The end of the year was perhaps too busy a time to ask more of parents and teachers already overwhelmed by end-of-the-year activities and responsibilities. The results indicated that the majority of respondents were women. It is difficult to know whether more male responses would have altered the results; however, most of the parents participating in school life were women. The population of Overfield is fairly homogenous and this raises a question about whether the same study would yield the same results in other settings. However, based on the success of programs such as the Model Early Learning Center, serving inner-city, low-income families, and the University of Massachusetts Lab School, serving a middle-class population, the experimenter believes that results would not vary too much.

The results of the study do aid in answering the research questions posed in Chapter I. The research questions were as follows:

1. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education increase the quantity and quality of parent involvement in the school program?
2. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education have a positive impact on parent attitudes toward school experiences?

3. Will adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education have a positive impact on staff attitudes toward parent involvement?

The results suggest that the answer to question one is indeed yes. Again, the results show that there were 413.5 completed volunteer hours in the 1994-1995 school year, there was 100% participation in parent-teacher conferences, and over 50% attendance at all other school meetings and events. Efforts to identify parent skills and expertise led to more specific and at times more helpful parent participation.

The answer to question two is also yes when considering the comments of parents. Parents indicated, 100%, that they felt parent participation was important and that Overfield provided appropriate opportunities for participation. Parents listed specific events such as The Night Tree celebration, field trips, and sledding as favorites. Parents generally enjoyed being able to share in their children's experiences and expressed great satisfaction with their children's school experiences.

The staff, as well, indicated that they felt very good about parent participation. The staff responses noted the importance of parent participation in allowing the school program to continue offering particular experiences. The staff felt that parent participation indicated real interest of the parents and a sense of responsibility for their children's development. Staff enjoyed the sense of partnership with parents. Thus, it seems that the answer to question three is also yes.
What does all this mean for educators trying to adapt and implement the Reggio approach? The results of this study as well as the related literature suggest that educators adapting the Reggio approach and trying to increase and improve parent participation should keep in mind some key strategies. The following strategies are helpful in developing strong programs:

1. Understand the child as part of a family and honor that relationship by encouraging a link between home and school.
2. Determine the obstacles that prevent parents from participating.
3. Consider the interests and needs of families when developing programs.
4. Develop as many different kinds of opportunities for parent participation as possible. Orient and train parent volunteers.
5. Respect and enjoy the skills and expertise that parents bring.

The first strategy is closely tied with a school's philosophy about children. Understanding children as part of families and allowing those family experiences to carry over into school helps children to know that teachers believe that their life away from school is very important. LeeKeenan and Nimmo (1993) assert that linking home experiences and school experiences creates a very important relationship. Bringing home and school together is the first step in developing a program that welcomes and encourages parent participation.

Coleman (1991) suggests that a program determine the obstacles that keep parents from participating. Look closely at why parents are not active in school life. Are there opportunities for parents? Do parents know about these opportunities? Do working parents have opportunities? Once educators know why parents are not participating they
can work to develop better strategies. Another critical suggestion from Lancy and Nattiv (1992) is to develop a program specifically for recruiting and training parent volunteers. This allows parents to help in an area most suited to their own interests. Training programs give parents a clear sense of their responsibilities and roles as volunteers. The results of this study indicate that parent volunteers do want guidance and clear roles established before they become volunteers.

Meeting each and every family's individual needs and interests is probably impossible, but educators can try to meet as many of those needs as possible. The interests, skills, and expertise of parents is easily ascertained with a questionnaire. Once parent interests are identified educators can develop ways to make use of those parent skills. For example, if a particular parent indicates that he enjoys woodworking, he can help children in the woodworking area or help repair broken toys and furniture. With so many working parents it is not always easy for parents to find a time to participate in school activities. Educators must account for this and schedule conference times, meetings, and special events at times other than school hours. Most parents will participate if they can.

Finally, educators must respect and honor parents. Parents have knowledge and resources that they can share. Teachers have knowledge and resources they can share. When parents and teachers work together to nurture and encourage children's development it is an exciting, fulfilling partnership. As Gambetti (1995) indicated, parents who felt respect from the teachers willingly and gladly participated in school life. The results of this study, as well indicate that parents felt welcome at school and were encouraged to participate; as a result, participation was high.
More and more parent participation in the schools is seen as essential to the survival of the school and to the achievement of children. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education supports a tradition of parent participation. In these Italian schools parents are partners with educators, encouraging and supporting children's development and growth. A variety of opportunities for parent participation leads to extensive parent involvement in the Reggio program.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether adapting the Reggio approach increases and improves parent participation in an early childhood program. The impact of adapting Reggio was determined from the results of a year long record of volunteer hours, parent interviews, parent attitude surveys, and a staff attitude survey.

Throughout the school year the experimenter recorded the number of hours classroom volunteers spent in the classroom each month. The experimenter also recorded the number of excused no shows and no shows that occurred each month. A final total was noted after adding the monthly totals. The results showed that there were 413.5 completed volunteer hours.

The parent interviews, conducted over the phone in the evenings and weekends in early May, provided insight to parents feelings about their experiences participating in school life. Parents commented that they had many favorite memories including sledding, field trips, and attending family events. Less pleasing experiences such as feeling unsure about their role as a volunteer, inconvenient times of events, and disruption of their children's day were also noted.

The parent attitude surveys profiled the demographics of the parent population as well as illustrated that participation was very high among parents. One hundred percent of parents felt that Overfield provided appropriate opportunities for parent participation and
93% felt that these opportunities were flexible enough to meet their family's busy schedules.

The staff attitude survey presented demographic information about the staff population. As well, the survey indicated staff attitudes about parent participation. The staff felt positive about parent participation for these reasons: parents are very supportive of the program and help us to do things we couldn't otherwise do and there is a very positive sense of community between the school and families. Concerns about more training of volunteers and better use of volunteers was also indicated.

In conclusion, the results of this study prove that adapting the principles of Reggio does lead to increased parent participation, positive parent attitudes about school, and positive staff attitudes about parents. At a time when many educators are concerned about the lack of parent involvement in education, Reggio deserves a closer look. The schools in Italy and the American schools adapting this approach do have high parent participation and they do have a sense of partnership between parents and educators. Parents and educators work together for children; this is what creates a happy, thriving school.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


OVERFIELD PARENT RESOURCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name ____________________________________ Child’s Name _______________________

Phone Number _____________________________

Circle the time your child attends: M T W TH F AM PM

1. I would like to be a volunteer helper

__________ in the office _________ in the art room

__________ in the classroom

How often? _________ one day every week

__________ one day every other week

__________ one day every month

__________ occasionally, as needed

2. I have access to a place for an appropriate field trip. It is:

__________ a farm

__________ a business which is ______________________

__________ other (please specify) ______________________

3. I have a pet which could visit the school. It is a(n):


4. I have access to a kiln to fire clay ________.

5. Two of the special holiday or family traditions that we enjoy at our house are:


I would like to come to school and share one or both of these with my child’s class.

6. I would like to help with the following project this year:

__________ Newsletter (circle those that apply)

typing, stapling, reviewing parents’ books, reviewing children’s books, recipes

__________ Family Carry-In Dinners

__________ Parent Meetings

__________ Room Mother or Father

__________ Maintenance (minor repairs, painting, etc.)

__________ Overfield Spring Fair

7. I have the following skills which I am willing to share in the class:

__________ sewing _________ carpentry

__________ making cookies _________ gardening

__________ working with clay _________ dancing, exercising, yoga

__________ reading, story telling

__________ playing a musical instrument (please specify) _________

__________ other (please specify) ______________________

THANK YOU!
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<tr>
<th>VOLUNTEER</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
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<th>NOVEMBER</th>
<th>DECEMBER*</th>
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MONTHLY TOTALS

* - Recognition Month
NS - No Show and No Phone Call
ENS - Excused No Show
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Appendix C

Interview Questions For Overfield Parents

Name:

Number of Children in School:

Volunteer: Yes ____ No ____

Questions:

1. Do you feel that parent participation is important in the schools? Why or why not?

2. In what ways did you participate in your child’s school experience this year?

3. Did you find the staff open and receptive to your involvement?

4. Did you feel that you were given specific and clear directions for helping in the classroom, office, or gym?

5. Was scheduling time to be active in school activities compatible with your schedule?

6. What was your favorite part of participating?

7. What was your least favorite part of participating?

8. Do you have any suggestions for improving opportunities for parent involvement at Overfield?

9. Additional Comments:
Appendix D

Parent Participation and Attitude Survey

Please respond to each question as it relates to your experience at Overfield. Please check any and all appropriate answers. Please check a yes twice if both you and your spouse participated.

1. Your gender: _____ Female _____ Male

2. Age: 20-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50+ _____

3. Your marital status: _____ Married _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____ Single

4. Do you work outside the home? _____ Yes _____ No

5. If yes, is work _____ Full-time _____ Part-time?

6. Does your spouse work outside the home? _____ Yes _____ No

7. If yes, is work _____ Full-time _____ Part-time?

8. Do you have children enrolled at schools other than OECP? _____ Yes _____ No

9. Do you or your spouse volunteer in the _____ classroom _____ gym _____ office?

10. Did you or your spouse participate in any class field trips at OECP? _____ Yes _____ No

11. Did you or your spouse participate in parent/teacher conferences? _____ Yes _____ No

12. Did you or your spouse participate in any parent meetings? _____ Yes _____ No

13. Did you or your spouse participate in the family carry-in dinner? _____ Yes _____ No

14. Did you or your spouse come to the Night Tree celebration? _____ Yes _____ No

15. Did you or your spouse come to any Saturday Series performances? _____ Yes _____ No
16. Did you or your spouse come to/help with the Spring Festival? ____ Yes  ____ No

17. Do you feel that OECP provides appropriate opportunities for parent involvement?
   ____ Yes  ____ No

18. Do you feel that generally the scheduling of meetings and events meets your family's needs? ____ Yes  ____ No

19. Please list and comment on the strengths of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

20. Please list and comment on the weaknesses of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

21. Additional comments:
Appendix E

 Staff Attitude Survey on Parent Participation

1. What is your position at OECP? ______________________________________________________

2. Is your position: _____ Full-time   _____ Part-time

3. Please list and comment on the strengths of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

4. Please list and comment on the weaknesses of parent participation and collaboration at OECP.

5. Additional comments: