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Developing a quality parent program for Dunkerton Preschool

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Developing a quality parent program for Dunkerton Preschool

Abstract

This study addressed the topic of developing a quality parent program for the Dunkerton (Iowa) Preschool. A literature research study focused on benefits of a parent program and the problems associated with implementing parent education, involvement, and support. Guidelines and resources for planning and developing a successful program were outlined. Conclusions were drawn from the literature and recommendations were made for pertinent guidelines for the Dunkerton Preschool.

DEVELOPING A QUALITY PARENT PROGRAM
FOR DUNKERTON PRESCHOOL

A Graduate Project

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education

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By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Changes in Parent Involvement

New challenges of parenthood, such as changes in the structure and lifestyle of families, and pressure for children to know and do more at an earlier age have increased the need for early childhood programs to provide programs for parents. “The formation of partnerships between parents and teachers that will foster children’s development has been a persistent goal of most early childhood programs and elementary schools” (Powell, 1990, p. 1). Kagan (1995) suggested, “...parents recognize that parenting is important and that they can benefit from help in meeting their parenting duties” (p. 1). “Research on stress, social support, and parenting behavior has led to calls for early childhood programs to help strengthen parenting behavior by addressing parent’s needs” (Powell, 1998, p. 61). Kagan (1995) discussed a survey published by the Public Agenda in 1994 that found 55% of parents thought that they themselves were doing a worse job of parenting than their parents did.

Laws such as the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (Public Law 99-457) and the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 99-142) have changed the way early intervention services are provided. The family’s strengths and needs are looked at in terms of the effect on the child’s development. Services are provided for the family system and not just the child. Head Start has been involving parents and families in program activities since its start in 1965.

Powell (1998) presented the results of a survey of center-based programs that were school-sponsored, nonprofit, and for-profit. Less than one-half of the programs offered

provisions for volunteering in the classroom or home visiting. Workshops were offered by 64% of the school-based programs, but by less than one-half of nonprofit or for-profit programs. Head Start programs were an exception. Head Start programs provided more opportunities for volunteering, workshops, and home visiting than any of the other types of programs did.

In general, the parent education programs currently offered for parents tend to follow certain principles. The programs focus on prevention rather than treatment; work with the entire family and community; regard the family as an active participant; focus on a strength-based needs analyses; and expect families to be responsible for their children's development and well-being (Kagan, 1995).

Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool

The Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool program is housed in the Dunkerton Community School District building. This program will be referred to as the Dunkerton Preschool in the rest of this study. The preschool room is located in the primary wing of the elementary school portion of the Dunkerton School. The program is part of the Dunkerton public school system. The Dunkerton School District serves approximately 550 students in preschool through twelfth grade. The school district serves children from several small towns surrounding Dunkerton and the rural communities surrounding Dunkerton. The community of Dunkerton is composed of mostly white, middle to lower-class families.

The preschool program in Dunkerton, Iowa, began serving four-year-olds in 1985 as a Chapter 1 program. Children were accepted based on their scores on a developmental screening assessment. Eight children were served four mornings per week. Parents did not pay tuition and no parent education component was required. After six years, the program staff changed, as did the program hours. The program changed to two full days in 1991; in 1992, the teacher's

position became full-time because of the addition of students who attended and were charged tuition. In 1993, a part-time associate was hired. Up until this time the teacher worked with only eight students per class. Three-year-old children were served by the program beginning in 1993. The preschool teaching position was not included on the certified teachers' salary schedule until 1996; up until this time the teacher was paid an hourly wage. The associate's position did not become full-time until 1998. Currently, the preschool teacher is certified and is considered a full-time employee of the Dunkerton Schools with the same benefits and salary schedule of the teaching staff.

The staff of the Dunkerton Preschool has provided various parent education and involvement opportunities. In the late 1990s, the elementary principal and the elementary teaching staff, including the preschool teacher, organized a Parent University Program. The Parent University was offered for three or four years with only three parents attending the last year the Parent University was offered. Home visits have been a component of the program for the past seven to eight years. At times the home visits were considered mandatory for all students. Currently home visits are conducted for those parents interested in having the teacher visit their home. Because the preschool program is funded by federal dollars as part of the school's Title 1 program, the teachers involved with Title 1 programs offer three or four parent involvement/education nights per school year. The format for the Title 1 Family Nights is varied, but usually includes a meal, childcare, and activities. The activities may include parents and children working, playing, and learning together or a session for parents only.

The current program offers the following parent activities: Open House and home visits before school starts in the fall, parent newsletters (every one or two weeks), monthly calendars, holiday parties, Title 1 Family Nights, parent-teacher conferences (two or three per school year),

field trips, preschool registration night, and other correspondence by notes, phone calls or meetings as necessary.

The 2002-2003 school year will be my fourth year of teaching with this program. Programming changes were made beginning with the 2000-2001 school year. Changes were based on the results of an informal survey I developed. The Dunkerton Preschool currently offers a two, three, or five-half-day per week program for children ages three, four, or five. Children are admitted on a first come, first served basis. The program is tuition-based with a sliding fee scale for families that meet the financial guidelines. Special accommodations have been made in previous years to provide all-day programming in the preschool for a kindergarten age-eligible child whose parents chose to wait to send the child to kindergarten.

The 2002-2003 year will be the first year the school district is contracting with the Head Start program to provide services for low-income families in the Dunkerton School District. This will require that children who attend the three-day per week class stay longer to be served lunch and the children in the five-day per week class arrive earlier for the same reason. This also means that the Dunkerton Preschool Program will need to follow the guidelines for Head Start Program Performance Standards, Program Regulations, and Program Guidance (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the literature concerning quality programs for parents of children enrolled in the Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool and to present guidelines for implementing a program for parents of preschoolers that emphasizes involvement, education, and support. To accomplish this purpose, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What are the benefits of programs for parents?
2. What are the problems associated with programs for parents?
3. What guidelines are needed for an effective parent program in the Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool?

Need for the Study

I believe parents and the child's family are an integral part of their child's educational process. The preschool teacher needs to be working as a team with the family to help the child develop and grow to his or her own full potential full potential. Preschool is the family's first encounter with school. It is important that the relationships between the family and the school get off to a good start. I think the parent component of the Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool Program could be strengthened by the development of a Family Handbook, providing additional opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education, and developing a program for parent education that meets the parents' and children's needs while providing support.

"The concept of the parent education field has broadened considerably in the past two decades" (Powell, 1990, p. 1). There has not been sufficient research about effects of programs using a modest approach with families, that is, programs for families that provide some services but are not extensive or intensive. Research on working- and middle-class populations is also

lacking. Determining program quality and quality outcomes is an issue that needs to be addressed. Most current research has been on pilot programs conducted by the program developers without random assignment of participants to control variables.

There are no specifications for “...the competencies, training, or credentials needed for working in the programs...” or “...tools to evaluate program quality” (Kagan, 1995, p. 2). Powell (1998, p. 66) recommended “...special emphasis should be given to skills in learning and appreciating the perspectives of families.”

Limitations

A limitation of this study would be the application of the findings and results to all programs serving young children. I am mainly interested in early childhood programs serving three-, four- and five-year-olds in a half-day preschool setting. The program the author describes as a quality program for parents may not be applicable to centers serving more families or a broader range of ages of children served. I am interested in providing a program that supports families but is not comprehensive in meeting all the needs of the families. The program will be designed more for educational purposes and with less attention being given to the allocation of resources for families.

The goals and philosophy of the individual early childhood program will determine the program’s definition of a quality program for parents, as will the needs of the parents. Powell (1998) supported the premises mentioned above by stating, “Methods of working with parents should be locally grown and shaped by the expressed preferences and needs of families. One size does not fit all” (p. 65). Research on the effectiveness of home visits can be challenging to apply because of the variety of types of home visits programs and the philosophical orientation of the program (Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie, 2002).

The study is limited to the review of research available through the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Some studies were not available or were missing because the library budget had been reduced. The study is also limited by the lack of research reports about parent education programs.

Definitions

Parent education may include; "...parent empowerment, family education, family life education, parent support, and family support" (Kagan, 1995, p. 2). This may also include, "...training to help parents care for, stimulate, and teach their child, including training in how to best manage the child and/or how to engage the child in activities that will promote optimal development and learning" (White, Taylor & Moss, 1992, p. 93).

Activities for parent programs might include practical skills workshops, family outings with children, adult social events without children, or peer support groups.

Parent involvement would include attendance at special class parties or trips, returning forms and papers when requested, volunteering in the classroom, and sharing hobbies or talents.

Parent support would include "a support network to share feelings, discuss concerns, receive constructive and empathetic responses to questions and observations, and enjoy a sense of friendship and camaraderie" (White et al., 1992, p. 93).

Dunkerton Preschool refers to the preschool program located in the town of Dunkerton, Iowa, which is operated as part of the Dunkerton Community School District.

Preschool means a half-day program offered by a public school, for-profit, or nonprofit agency.

Home visits are visits to the home made by the teacher. The purpose of the home visits made the teacher of the Dunkerton Preschool is to help with the transition process of the child to school.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Benefits of Programs for Parents

Kagan (1995) suggested that programs for parents “do enhance parents’ overall competence and self-efficacy, knowledge of child development, and capacities to parent more effectively” (p. 3). A study by Draper, Larsen and Rowles (1997) of 53 families with young children was conducted to determine if it was valuable to teach the principles of developmentally appropriate practice to parents. The “central goal of the parent training program was to affect the emotional climate in the home by making it a more encouraging place for young children” (Draper, Larsen & Rowles, 1997, p. 487). During the three-month long weekly parent training program, the typical capabilities of young children in the emotional, physical, and cognitive domains were covered. The measure used to compile data regarding the family was the Georgia Family Q-Sort. The measures used for data collection for the children were: the California Preschool Social Competency Scale, a locally devised gross motor skills assessment, and a locally devised measure of children’s self-esteem. The main outcomes observed in the children “were related to the effect of the parent training program lowering levels of parental task expectations and family conflict and increasing the supportive leadership parents offer their young children” (Draper et al., 1997, p. 499).

Coleman and Ganong (1983) discussed the Parent-Child Interactions (PCI) program. This program is based on research findings that parents can be effective teachers of their own children and children learn through play. When parents interact and play with their children, they can guide the children to learn important concepts while establishing a parent-child relationship. The PCI program focused on toys that can help the parents teach their children

concepts. Parents received guidesheets on how to use a particular toy and were shown a video of a parent interacting with a child with the toy. They concluded that PCI's approach of active participation by the parents could help the children make gains in cognitive development.

White, Taylor, and Moss (1992) identified six rationales for involving parents based on previous literature:

1. Parents are responsible for the welfare of their children.
2. Involved parents provide better political support and advocacy.
3. Early intervention programs which involve parents result in greater benefits for children.
4. Parent involvement activities benefit parents and family members.
5. By involving parents, the same outcomes can be achieved at less cost.
6. The benefits of early intervention are maintained better if parents are involved.

The authors noted that one or more of these rationales are generally chosen as the basis for involving parents in an early intervention program.

Harris and Larsen (1989) questioned if parent education is a necessary component of early education programs that serve parents with higher education and income levels. They concluded that the parents generally showed changes in attitude and behavior, and the children may show later effects on school performance. The understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practice would help parents become more familiar with realistic expectations for their child. Vail (2001) stated that the notion behind parent education is, "The best and perhaps only way to help students is to first help their parents" (p. 23). All educators want the students they teach to succeed.

Kasting (1994) reported the findings of a parent involvement project called the ANCHOR Project (Addressing the Needs of Children Through Observation and Response). Participants of the ANCHOR Project included twenty-four families and their 2-year-old children. The children attended preschool while the parents observed on closed-circuit television. The parents and a facilitator would discuss their observations in an effort to understand children better. The guiding principles of the program were mutual respect, shared responsibility, and reciprocity. Parents were respected for their thoughts and the information they shared, and by contributing to the discussion, the parents shared the responsibility for their learning. Parents identified the development of improved observation skills as a benefit of the program. "Most parents found the engagement with different perspectives to be more beneficial than the acquisition of new information" (p. 147).

Vopat (1994 &1998) discussed The Parent Project in his two books: More Than Bake Sales: The Resource Guide for Family Involvement Education and The Parent Project: A Workshop Approach to Parent Involvement. He suggested that four principles have guided the work of The Parent Project (1998). The four principles are the following:

1. Parents are their child's first teacher and an ongoing teacher and lifelong influence.
2. Parents and teachers share the same goal of academic success of children.
3. Parents and teachers must work together equally to increase each other's understanding and enrich the learning of children.
4. Writing and reading workshops can engage parents and teachers in building a sense of community and renew an enthusiasm for learning.

Problems of Programs for Parents

Epstein (1986) asked, "Does it matter to parents whether teachers' practices emphasize separation or cooperation with families?" (p. 284). She suggested that there is not a significant amount of research on whether there are measurable effects on parents when teachers make an effort to involve the parents. The lack of research compounds the problem of the educator who may lack the knowledge and expertise of working with and educating parents.

Kieff and Wellhousen (2000) suggested that teacher's efforts at parent involvement opportunities might include some assumptions about parents and families. These assumptions may include factors that are barriers to a family's involvement level in a school activity. Teachers need to know about a family's structure, lifestyle, and culture so the teacher can make the necessary adjustments for the comfort of the families and children involved. Some of the barriers might include cultural practices, religious beliefs, disabilities, unemployment, transportation, discomfort in school situations, food, curriculum, decorations/celebrations, and income level. Powell (1998) lists some other barriers to attendance that should be addressed by organizers of parent programs including: providing childcare, transportation, and recruitment through personal contact. Other factors that may affect attendance include time and work commitments.

Lamb-Parker, Piotrkowski, Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Clark, and Peay (2001) conducted a study of two Head Start agencies. The group used the Barriers to Head Start Parent Participation Survey developed by the Head Start Research Group to discern which life experiences were reported by mothers as being actual barriers to parent involvement. Only two of the thirty-three possible barriers listed were reported by at least one-fourth of the mothers as being actual barriers. Those two barriers were schedule conflicts with Head Start activities and having to care

for younger children at home. Their conclusion was that Head Start needed to modify their parent involvement activities, like volunteering in the classroom, that conflict with a working mother's schedule.

An important challenge "...is to develop ways of engaging parents that respond to a family's interests and life circumstances" (Powell, 1998, p. 63). The educator who is trying to engage these parents may encounter problems with the commitment of time and other resources necessary to develop, organize, and conduct a program that will meet everyone's diverse needs and situations.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) conducted a review of research on parent involvement and concluded that how parents perceive their role in their children's education and how much they believe they can help affects their level of involvement. They proposed three factors that influence a parent's decision to be involved in their children's education. Powell (1998) listed these three questions as the following:

1. What am I supposed to do in relation to my child's education and educational progress?
2. Can I exert a positive influence on my child's educational outcomes?
3. Do my child and the school want me to be involved?

Vail (2001) suggested that parent educators feel that their efforts don't always reach the parents who need the most help and support. This is a concern and also brings up questions of morals and values. Who decides the definition of effective parenting and what does it look like?

Goodson, Layzer, St.Pierre, Bernstein, and Lopez (2000) studied the effects of the Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP). The program was designed to provide a range of education, health, and social services to multi-risk, low-income children and their

parents. After following the families for 5 years, the authors concluded "...the model of helping children from low-income families primarily by delivering services to their parents ought to be reconsidered, if not abandoned..." (p. 33). This program differed from the parent program being developed and offered by the Dunkerton Preschool. The Dunkerton Preschool will have as its focus the child in the classroom with the secondary factor being how the parent can help the child in the classroom. The CCDP program based most of its efforts on helping the parents and then hoping to improve the child's developmental outcomes.

Jacobson and Engelbrecht (2000) conducted a study by surveying parents from twenty-seven licensed child-care centers and preschools from a random sample of centers in 13 cities and rural communities in north Texas. This study is of interest because the ethnic background of the participants closely resembles that of the community of Dunkerton, Iowa. Of the 1,500 surveys distributed, 740 were returned. Ninety percent of the parents were White and English-speaking. The survey was a five-page needs assessment that "...was developed to ascertain the range of ecologies of the participants..." (p. 141). One of the limitations of this study was the fact that only parents who were interested in completing the survey participated. The study found that a survey of potential parent program participants could provide information regarding parents' needs and interests. Another result concluded from the study was that parents who had attended college differed from those parents who had not attended college in the sources of help they find useful and the methods of learning about parenting information. This makes the parent educator's job more difficult by trying to meet the individual needs of all the participants.

CHAPTER 3

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A QUALITY PARENT PROGRAM

Pertinent Guidelines for the Dunkerton, Iowa, Preschool

Guidelines that apply specifically to the Dunkerton Preschool Program are necessary for developing a quality parent program. The guidelines will address the steps to develop and implement the program. Guidelines set a purpose for the components of a quality parent program.

- 1) A needs assessment survey should be conducted to determine the needs and interests of the families involved in the preschool program.**

The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) can be used to provide a framework for determining how parents perceive their needs (Jacobson & Engelbrecht, 2000). Parenting includes family interactions and interactions with other members of the community and society. A needs assessment can help determine parents' preferred sources of help or information about parenting, preferred methods of learning, and the topics of interest.

- 2) The goals and objectives of the program for parents should meet the needs and interests of the families involved.**

Keller and Dade (2000) indicated that families do not perceive all types of support as being helpful but all families can benefit from support. Low-income families don't have the same sources of support that middle- and upper-income families have. Low-income families also have the added burden of chronic stressors such as meeting basic needs.

Parents need to develop their own individual goals for participating in the program (Dembo, Sweitzer & Lauritzen, 1985). Parents need a purpose for attending and need to decide what they want to get out of the program.

Powell (1990) suggested four dimensions of high-quality programs for parents that are important considerations to keep in mind.

1. The goal of a quality program is to enable parents in their child-rearing roles. Program staff should serve as facilitators of goals and activities by providing opportunities for open-ended discussions about information that meets parents' needs.
2. Programs should focus on the needs of the parent and the child. The parents are offered social support through interpersonal relationships.
3. Programs need to be customized to meet the needs and characteristics of the population served.
4. A large portion of the program time is allotted for discussion that is open-ended and dominated by the parents. An experiential component helps parents process new information in relation to existing beliefs.

3) Barriers to parent participation and involvement should be addressed.

The objectives, content, and methods of a program need to be decided upon before the parent program can be implemented (Matthews & Hudson, 2001). Possible family-related factors that could create barriers and prevent or limit a family's participation need to be considered. Other common barriers and modifications should be considered. Kieff and Wellhausen (2000) include a *Family Involvement Planning Worksheet* (p. 21) and a *Common Barriers and Possible Modifications Checklist* (p. 23) to assist the organizers of parent involvement and education programs.

4) Parents should be included as active participants in the education of their children.

Duffy (2000), in her article, *Parenting 101*, stated "...most people sign up for parenting classes to find out how to change their kids" (p. 22). She concluded, "The hope of parents and parent educators is that adults can make choices that will guide children to make better choices" (p. 22). She suggested parenting classes need to be fun and encouraging. Parents should be respected for their knowledge and experience. Parents need to be asked questions about what they want for their child.

In Epstein's (1986) study of parents' reactions to parent involvement practices of teachers, she found differences in whether parents thought the teacher wanted them to help, whether they thought they had enough training to help, whether they did spend time with learning activities at home, and whether they could spend more time at home helping their child. Epstein (1986) suggested "the differences in whether parents believe they should help, can help, do help, and could help suggest strategies for organizing programs of parent involvement" (p. 291). If the teacher thinks parents should help then an active program needs to be developed for learning activities parents can do at home. A teacher who wants parents to know they can help needs to provide workshops on how they can help. Many parents already do help their children at home but need to know how they could help more effectively.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) concluded that the parents' personal sense of efficacy for helping their child in school is the most important reason why parents get involved in their child's education. Research supports the link between a strong sense of efficacy and the belief that children's abilities may be affected by effort. This means that parents need to know that their time and effort spent working with their child at home is necessary and needed for their

child's growth and development. Parents need to be recognized for their efforts to work with their child.

5) Evaluation of the parent program should be conducted.

Matthews and Hudson (2001) suggested "...the design and implementation of parent training programs should include evaluation as an integral component" (p. 77). The evaluation should occur before, during, and after implementation of any program. The evaluation process needs to include evaluation of the objectives of the program, the program content, the method of presentation, the implementation, and the outcomes.

6) Organizers of parent programs should consider the resources for information and suggestions about how to provide parent involvement and education.

Scott Stein and Thorkildsen (1999) concluded that knowing what research says about parent involvement and having a positive attitude about parent involvement does not determine how a person involves parents and is insufficient to motivate a person to provide opportunities for parent involvement. They suggested that educators should implement two or three suggestions on how to provide for parent involvement or "...take an existing practice and improve it" (p. 49). Several resources were discovered during the research phase of this paper that included suggestions for involving parents (Borrueil, 2002; Foster, 1994; State of Iowa Department of Education, 1998; Heath, 1999) or programs that have been conducted to educate and involve parents (Gutloff, 1996; Coleman 1997, Vopat, 1994; Vopat, 1998; Barber, 2000). The National Parent Information Network website contains links to a variety of information about parent programs.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the benefits and problems associated with developing and implementing a quality parent program for the Dunkerton Preschool. Guidelines that are pertinent for the Dunkerton Preschool were recommended. This paper addressed the following three questions to accomplish this purpose:

1. What are the benefits of programs for parents?

Henderson, editor of the annotated bibliography, The Evidence Continues to Grow (1987), stated in her introduction, "It is very clear everyone benefits when parents are involved, especially children" (p. 2). She included the following statement when summing up what we know: "Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long-lasting, and well-planned" (p. 9). But, she included the following question about what we still need to know, "What resources do parents and educators need to be able to work effectively as partners?" (p. 10). Resources include time, information, people, finances, and community support. If the resources are used effectively, everyone involved with the parent program will benefit.

2. What are the problems associated with programs for parents?

Meeting the needs and interests of all the participants involved can be a time-consuming process. Families have different barriers that can inhibit their participation and involvement in their child's educational process. Parents don't always know what to do to help their child or how to help their child. There are a variety of resources available that include suggestions for involving and educating parents, but the program has to meet the needs of the individual families involved. When these resources are not used effectively, problems can occur in parent programs.

3. What guidelines are needed for a quality parent program for the Dunkerton Preschool?

The following guidelines were developed as a result of this study:

1. A needs assessment survey should be conducted to determine the needs and interests of the families involved in the preschool program.
2. The goals and objectives of the program for parents should meet the needs and interests of the families involved.
3. Barriers to parent participation and involvement should be addressed.
4. Parents should be included as active participants in the education of their children.
5. Evaluation of the parent program should be conducted.
6. Organizers of the parent programs should consider the resources for information and suggestions about how to provide parent involvement and education.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

- 1. A needs assessment must be considered as the first step toward developing a quality parent program.**

The needs assessment would be more effective and representative if all families were required to complete and return the survey. The needs assessment could address issues about support the family perceives as helpful using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The needs assessment would be developed locally by pulling information from various sources. The needs assessment would also allow families to choose topics or interests for the parent program, ways to become involved in the preschool program, best times for workshops or involvement, the need for childcare or transportation, and would include a section for comments or suggestions.

2. The goals and objectives of the program should be established based on the results of the needs assessment.

A team of interested parents and the preschool teacher could complete the development of the goals and objectives. Parental involvement will help contribute to the parents' development of ownership of the program.

3. The program content should: meet the needs and interests of the families involved, provide for active participation, and create accommodations for possible barriers to family involvement.

The needs assessment can help determine the interests of the families and their needs including the methods of implementing the program that would be the most beneficial and the barriers that need to be addressed. The needs assessment should be repeated periodically. Accommodations can be addressed by the needs assessment.

4. An evaluation process is a necessary component of the program.

Evaluation needs to be an on-going process that helps drive the goals, objectives, and content of the program. Parents, as well as teachers, should be involved in the evaluation process.

Recommendations

Hymes (1981) suggested that when working with parents the first step is "to build good personal relationships with parents" (p. 181). He described *parent education* as the communication the teacher has with the family about the events that occur during school, "The teacher has the information; the parent does not" (p. 183).

Vail (2001) sought advice from experienced parent educators about how to enhance parent-teacher relationships. Suggestions for improving this relationship are the following: be

persistent by recruiting families, open the programs to all parents in the school system, hold meetings in other places instead of the school, teaching staff should reflect the diversity of the population, offer child care, and provide opportunities for parents to build relationships with other parents.

Recommendations for the development and enhancement of the parent program at Dunkerton Preschool include:

1. conducting a needs assessment of the families involved with the program;
2. developing the goals and objectives of the program with parent input;
3. planning the method of the program using a variety of resources and modes of instruction and involvement;
4. evaluating the program using formative and summative evaluation.

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