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A PROGRAM OF PARENTAL EDUCATION
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TYLER, TEXAS

By
Myrtle Bledsoe Spencer

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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In The

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of

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Prairie View, Texas

August, 1956

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M. B. S.

DEDICATION

Lovingly dedicated to my mother and sisters, whose love and sympathetic understanding have sustained my every effort through the years.

M. B. S.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Myrtle Bledsoe Spencer was born in Winnsboro, Wood County, Texas, the fifth child of Hattie Bell and the late Thaddeus Cornelius Bledsoe.

She graduated from high school in the Tyler Public Schools, Tyler, Texas. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics from Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College, Prairie View, Texas, May, 1934, and is a candidate for a Master of Science degree in Home Economics Education from the same institution August, 1956.

She initiated the program of home economics in the Emmett Scott High School, Tyler, Texas, where she has been continuously employed as homemaking teacher until the present time.

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Tyler, Texas

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tyler, the largest centrally located urban center in East Texas, is the retail and wholesale trade and service center of this area. The city is almost the exact geographic center of an East Texas area comprising thirty-four counties and is located approximately one hundred miles east of Dallas, and the same distance west of Shreveport, Louisiana. It has a City Commission-Manager form of government, and is the oil office headquarters for two hundred and sixty-seven independent and major producers, operators, and refiners. It is predominantly a wholesaling and distributing center, in that approximately one hundred and fifty processing plants are located there as well as ninety-three wholesale and distribution firms.

A fairly wide variation of manufacturing concerns now exist in Tyler. Industrial expansion is largely responsible for the growth of the population since 1940, which has had a gain of 10,585 in the decade 1940 to 1950. (14)¹ The annual industrial payroll in Tyler was estimated to be over \$12,000,000 in 1953, and has steadily increased because the

¹This number and all similar succeeding ones refer to references in the Bibliography.

population continued to increase. The population at the time of the study was approximately 55,000, of which twenty per cent were American born Negroes.

Tyler's rose industry propagates more than sixty per cent of the field grown rose bushes produced in the United States today, doing a sales volume of over \$7,500,000 annually. (14)

Constant construction of schools has enabled Tyler to keep pace with its progressive growth, and at the time of this study, Tyler had fourteen public schools, five of which were for Negroes. A public Junior College, two four-year colleges for Negroes, two business colleges, one of which was for Negroes, and two parochial schools, were also to be found in Tyler. Vocational training was offered as a part of the regular curriculum in both private and public schools.

The high school curriculum was flexible to the extent that it offered contemporary classes modeled after the core program: commercial training, driver education, industrial arts, distributive education, homemaking, agriculture and art. Pupil participation in activities was encouraged in both junior and senior high schools. Both schools had an active student council which shared in the school planning.

The total school census for Tyler Public Schools at the time of this study was 8,606, of which 1,884 were Negroes.

A few students were brought by bus from the nearby communities within a radius of twenty miles, such as: Arp, Bullard, Chapel Hill, Lindale, Troup, and Whitehouse.

The present study was an approach to one of the many problems of the community. It was an attempt to bring parents into the school and to discuss with them the needs of youth and the methods which were used by the schools to help to meet those needs. It was also an attempt to demonstrate how parents can help and be helped in solving the many problems of youth and of adults.

It was hoped that through the study parents would be afforded the opportunity to see and to participate in an approach to the solution of many problems, as well as to gain information as to why children react as they do. They would be given guidance into the realization that many of the actions and reactions of children are normal behavior for the age, growth pattern and developmental tasks of children and youth.

The writer made this study in the hope that it might aid one in developing a program of education for parents of children in the schools of Tyler, Texas. A suggested guide has been developed for organizing parent education groups. The desirable characteristics of group leaders, gained from the literature, have been included.

This study is offered with the hope that others who are interested in parent education may find in it a guide to a study of the program. It is believed that this is the true meaning of progressive education.

According to Umstatted:

"... Education advances as society advances. It is sensitive to changes in our culture, and it seeks to keep abreast of progress in all its aspects of modern life. In the vanguard itself, it is alert to the directives of all of the constructive forces at work in our society. It uses the new developments to make learning in the schools more effective in enriching and elevating human living." (16)

"Education as understood today, connotes all those processes cultivated by a given society. It is the systematic, harmonious development of all of our faculties. It begins in the nursery and goes on at school, but does not end there. It continues through life whether we will it or not... Every person has two educations, one which he receives from others, and one more important, which he gives himself." (3)

Spafford stated:

"Education is seen as a continuous life process, providing tools for meeting changes as they occur and for directing change when that is more desirable; to be measured by the intelligence and adequacy with which an individual meets the various life situations in which he finds himself. The individual is educated to use, with discernment, other instruments in society as means for continuing his education--the newspaper the radio, the merchant from whom he buys, those with whom he works and lives." (10)

Parent education is one form of adult education which seeks to help parents to discharge their parental responsibilities more satisfactorily and to understand themselves and their children as individuals, the relationships of members of the same family with each other, community

influences affecting these relationships, and the implications for family living of contemporary, social, economic and political movements. Programs which aim to help children and young people to function more effectively and more satisfactorily in their contemporary family relationships and to prepare them for future family life and parenthood, are also sometimes described as parent education. (2)

Education is a developmental process through interaction with the whole being and grows out of human experiences. It may be mainly esthetic, ethical, intellectual, physical or technical, but to be most satisfactory it must involve and develop all these sides of human capacity.

Parental education consists of those processes which enable parents to understand their children's physical, mental and emotional growth and to understand how to stimulate childhood tendencies in the direction of socially acceptable goals. It further aids parents in winning their children's confidence through a wholesome family environment; it is a mass mental hygienic movement full of possibilities for the better adjustment of the individual, both in family relationships and in larger aspects of social progress; it has inherent values of importance, not only for parents from all socio-economic levels, but also for those who stand in the place of parents, such as teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, librarians, ministers, church workers and people with various other skills.

With the growing recognition of the importance of the home in the development of wholesome, well-adjusted personalities, and of the need for cooperation between home, school, and community in planning an effective twenty-four hour program for children and youth, the responsibility of providing educational guidance for parents has been increasingly assumed by publicly supported agencies, some of which are the high school, colleges, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Home Demonstration Clubs, and 4-H Clubs.

Over the years, parents have expressed increasing interest in educational programs which would deepen their understanding of their role as fathers and mothers, and thus help them to guide their children's growth. Because there are many types of parent education programs and many ways of sponsoring and organizing them, parents and community groups have sought guidance in finding the way to the program which would be best suited to their particular situation.

The field of Parent education is still very much in flux. There is much room for further exploration, for the testing of new programs and new approaches to programs now in existence.

Parent education, had its formal beginning in this country with the establishment in 1888, at the suggestion of Dr. Felix Adler, of a Society for the Study of Child

Nature. (2) This society later became the Child Study Association of America and in 1921 it embarked on its wide sphere of influence under the direction of Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg. In 1897 a group of mothers organized what was called at that time, the Congress of Mothers. This later became the Congress of Parents and Teachers and has had an important influence on the education of parents.

The eminent psychologist of Clark University, G. Stanley Hall, was active in the child study movement during the early years. His approach was primarily one of collecting data on the activities of children, with scientific interest and curiosity, and he was only secondarily interested in the development of parent education programs. Another important movement which had widespread influence on parent education was the establishment of eighteen research and training centers in Child Development from grants by the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Fund. The National Council of Parent Education, with seventy constituent member organizations, was established in 1925.

The point of view of those interested in parent education may best be determined from a portion of the 1928 biennial report of the National Council of Parent Education. Eleven goals of parent education were listed:

- "1. To increase in parents the awareness of their opportunities as parents.

2. To enable them to meet the changing world with intelligence and serenity.
3. To induce them to evaluate their experiences, motives, behavior, and also their aims in child dealings.
4. To assist them in developing skills and techniques for dealing with situations arising from their functions as parents.
5. To enhance their satisfaction with their job.
6. To aid them in conceiving of the family in terms of continuing adjustments to higher levels.
7. To help them in orienting their family within enlarging contexts of neighborhood, community, nation, world.
8. To furnish them with the knowledge and the means of understanding and offering controls in the evolving problems of growth in themselves and their children.
9. To expand and enrich the total life of the family.
10. To develop in parents a group-consciousness, a sense of membership in a larger community of parents sharing similar experiences.
11. To stimulate the habit of study." (11)

The Parent Education Workshop Report listed these purposes of education:

- "1. To help parents and future parents gain insights and skills that will help them release the full potentialities of every family member, including themselves, for effective citizenship, and personal happiness.
2. To provide experiences that will help parents to attain the degree of integration and balance needed for effective use of skills and insights gained.
3. To help promote personal growth in all family members as long as life lasts.

Parents' needs were listed as follows:

1. To know what one should expect at successive age levels.
2. To understand why people act and feel as they do. To know the underlying drives behind human action. This is called dynamic psychology.
3. To know how to develop good relationships between parents and children, children and other children, between parents and between parents and grandparents.
4. To help families relate happily to their communities.
5. To understand and accept individual variations and the different problems related to them.
6. To help communities become more aware of helping parents with their problems." (9)

"Parent education has grown to proportions which can only be estimated. It has become one of the regular interests of both the Parent-Teacher Association and the American Association of University Women, of practically all of the religious groups in this country, and more recently, of such organizations as the Tuberculosis and Health Associations, mental health associations and many governmental units, notably the National Program of the County Agricultural Agents of state and local health departments, and public schools and university extension adult education programs. In addition, there are countless informal child study groups in communities all over the country. It would be conservative, therefore, to say that at least one million parents participate each year in specific parent education activities in this country, not counting those reached through the mass media of radio, television and the columns in daily and weekly newspapers, and women's magazines." (12)

Parent education can and should be clearly distinguished from the general teaching on family life which has been introduced into the public schools and colleges under such names as, home and family living or family life

education, on the one hand, and from broad mental health education efforts on the other. Parent education addresses itself to the parent directly and aims at giving parents an understanding of the dynamic interplay of parent-child relationships as well as of child development, as such. It seeks to help parents to understand better their parent role as distinguished from the role of marriage partner or of adult in his own right.

Parent education uses many approaches: the printed word in books, pamphlets, and newspaper columns; the sight and sound of radio, movies and television; the spoken word of the personal interview, the large meeting and the small discussion group. Of all of these approaches, the small discussion group, which had been a special interest of the Child Study Association since its inception in 1888 has become today most specifically identified as a parent education tool.

The extent and outreach of these programs call for their evaluation. Currently, a three-year study of the total realm of parent education is under way, sponsored jointly by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Child Study Association of America. This is the first systematic assessment in this area since 1935 and is expected to yield important data for the guidance of the entire field.

According to Tyler:

"The concepts a man holds about himself are powerful directives for his behavior. Over the years of recorded history, various concepts of man dominant in one group or another seem to have influenced man's behavior, particularly his social behavior, more than they have served to describe him. To understand any individual, we need to know what he thinks he is, what values he holds, what his goals are, as well as how his basic biological and social needs are met and what abilities he has." (15)

In the total societal change, education must help interpret life to each new generation. The primary purpose of such education is to influence attitudes, behavior, and practices of parents in the direction believed most desirable by the best contemporary opinions.

According to a recent study some scholars have come to believe that:

"No parent determines a child's destiny, but each parent helps shape it. All parents have the wonderful privilege of building homes in which children may learn the full meaning of human understanding; all can help their children achieve those positive traits of personality that make for self-fulfillment and responsible living in the years ahead. This has always been true, but never more important than today: Parents carry the future, first in their arms... and then in their words and deeds..." (13)

The purpose of this study was (1) to locate, if possible, some of the planned programs of parental education in certain Texas schools and to study these programs, (2) and to use the findings to determine the attitudes, and concerns of parents, teachers, principals and ministers in Tyler toward a planned program of parental education and from

these findings to offer some information, suggestions, and assistance in developing a program of parental education in the schools of Tyler, Texas, if such is needed and desired.

This study dealt with information which has been gained from various sources and opinions as expressed by parents, teachers, principals, ministers and other interested citizens. Some study of the methods and suggestions used by others in developing programs of parental education seemed necessary.

The study has been limited to finding out from parents, ministers, teachers, and other interested local leaders and citizens (1) whether they felt that there was a need for such a program in Tyler, (2) whether parent education should be offered through the Tyler Public Schools or/and through other organizations, (3) who should plan the program--parents, teachers and/or others, (4) who should be the leaders, (5) should interested organizations assist, (6) if group meetings were held, to suggest scheduling of the meetings, (7) interest in organizing and participating in a program of parental education.

The writer believed that there was a need for a planned program of parental education in the public schools of Tyler. Many of the parents of children who attend Tyler Schools had not had the benefit of formal training, even through the high school years. Many of them withdrew from

school during the lower grades and consequently they probably needed information of the basic developmental tasks of individuals; how they grow and develop into well-integrated, functioning social beings.

The writer further felt that such a study as this could be justified because of the assistance it might give to parents, administrators, teachers, and others who are interested in children. It was felt also, that organized classes or groups would permit the parents, teachers and others the opportunity to discuss common problems and to develop an understanding of, and a respect for the feelings, needs, and interests of each other which otherwise, they might not be able to experience.

It has been assumed by the writer that there is a need for a planned program of parent education for the parents of children in the schools of Tyler. The most serious problems which disturb communities today may be traced to the educational, economical and social status of the adult population. Primary among the three factors which bring about such problems is the kind of education, or the lack of it altogether.

A second assumption was that the organization of classes and study groups may be a necessary and helpful method in establishing this program in the schools. Parents may or may not put into practice all or nearly all of the knowledge which they may acquire in child study groups and

other classes, yet it is useful to know what they learn, under what circumstances they learn best, and how such learning may be measured and used.

A further assumption was that the author could not expect to present a complete picture of what parents would want in a program of parental education, though one might describe some of their needs, interests, and desires in regard to such a program.

A fourth assumption was that there are many resources, both individuals and groups, in Tyler and the surrounding vicinity which, if contacted, would cooperate in developing and establishing such a program. Their participation might also give impetus to the effort.

The writer finally assumed that parents need to secure information from reliable sources which can help them to solve their everyday problems with their children and that the schools in the community would be the logical places from which to disseminate this desired information and assistance.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Irons (8) emphasized in his comparative study of drop-outs, that one of the major problems in American secondary education today is the student who drops out of school before graduating. It is estimated that one-half of the pupils who have completed the fifth grade will not graduate from high school. He found in his study of twenty Negro boys, twenty-five Negro girls, twenty-five white boys, and twenty-five white girls, in grades 1-12, and ages 15-19 years, that reasons and causes of withdrawals among Negro boys were lack of interest, economic conditions, preference of work to school, to enter armed forces, and marriage. Ten Negro boys dropped out of school in the tenth grade, nine dropped out in the eleventh grade, which left one who remained beyond the eleventh grade level. The average education level attained by the mothers of these boys was slightly above the fourth grade and that of the fathers was approximately at the third grade level. The educational backgrounds of the parents, brothers, and sisters of all the youth studied were low. Thirty-two per cent of the fathers and sixteen per cent of the mothers did not complete the elementary level; eight per cent of mothers completed the elementary grades; forty-eight per cent of the fathers and forty-eight per cent of mothers

finished junior high level; eight per cent of fathers and forty-eight per cent of mothers finished high school; and one father had gone beyond the high school. "Eight per cent of the thirty-three older brothers and sisters and thirty younger brothers and sisters had graduated from high school."

The majority of the Negro girls dropped out when seventeen and eighteen years of age; nineteen because of pregnancy and/or marriage, and six because of economic conditions.

A study of parents' acceptance of their children was made by Hawkes and associates, (6) in which they pointed out that their research was designed to measure the personality development of rural children. As the study was developed the complexity of the over-all problem of personality development in the family became apparent. The scores of mothers and fathers showed considerable variation. Fathers' and mothers' degree of acceptance of children appeared to be independent of various social characteristics of parents. This was more definitely established for fathers than it was for mothers. The length of marriage appeared to be related to the degree to which mothers accepted their ten-year-old children. The study attempted to increase knowledge of parental acceptance of children, and the conclusion as stated was that parental acceptance of children is independent of the educational level of parents.

Walters and Bridges (17) believed that, as men evidence increasing responsibility for the rearing of children, it is important that they extend their knowledge, for recent trends point to the conclusion that parental attitudes are of considerable importance in determining children's adjustment to life. It is believed that such knowledge may contribute to a better understanding of the attitudes of men and women toward rearing children and may enable educators to improve the effectiveness of education for family living.

Braschi (1) found that the problem facing school districts throughout California was that of formulating a program to understand and to determine the educational needs of children. He stated that public relations in this country have been limited to Parent-Teacher organizations and a recently formed Better School Committee. The value of the Parent-Teacher Association had been limited by the fact that the South San Francisco Unified School District was an industrial community with a high percentage of working mothers and that the Parent-Teacher groups had become more nearly social. This fact had discouraged many parents from active participation, although for some others, it filled a definite need. The author felt that although the organizations in the community where this study was made had not begun an extensive program of parent education, they could be used to advantage.

Hickman (7) felt that a program is not a democratic one until all who are concerned participate in the planning.

This necessarily included the parents. Parents were wholeheartedly interested in their children, yet they did not visit the classroom. The teacher believed that she must know most of the influences which affected the pupil and must make use of them to contribute to the pupil's growth. In the pupil, parents and teacher have a common interest. Both have a cooperative responsibility in helping to prepare the child for future home life and in assisting him in adjusting himself to his present environment. These were some of the findings in regard to Parent-Pupil-Teacher planning:

- (1) When parents and teachers plan together the needs of the pupils are more clearly recognized and as a result their problems are more satisfactorily solved.
- (2) Parents, when given a chance, want to express their desires and make suggestions in regard to the program.
- (3) The teacher gains in perspective regarding the program and its responsibility in making for happier home relationships.
- (4) A definite bond is established between parents, pupils, and teachers.
- (5) Attitudes of the parents, pupils, and teachers were greatly changed and as a result many favorable outgrowths were expected.
- (6) Finally, parent-teacher-pupil planning is a democratic procedure which homemaking teachers might use to accomplish an effective homemaking program.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The normative-survey method was used in developing this study because the investigator wanted to secure data regarding current programs of parental education which were being conducted elsewhere and to gain information as to how the programs were started, how they were operated, what was included in the programs and the reasons for their successes and/or failures. Questionnaire inquiries, interviews, and observations were used in gathering the data. The investigator became acquainted with the recent trends in parental education by reading current, professional literature which included books, periodicals, magazine articles, bulletins, and studies made by other investigators which would shed additional light on the facts of the problem under consideration. The consensus of the majority of authors was that there existed a definite need for planned programs of parental education. The writer set out, therefore, to secure information as to what other Texas communities were doing in regard to programs of parental education and to find out the attitudes of coordinators, principals, teachers, ministers, and a heterogeneous group of parents, regarding instituting a program of parental education in the Tyler Public Schools.

A questionnaire was developed which included questions based upon:

1. A review of questionnaires which had been used for similar studies.
2. A study of some questionnaires used to secure information to be used in instituting workshops.
3. Conferences with parents and with educators in various fields.
4. Views expressed by students in the homemaking classroom at Emmett Scott High School, Tyler, Texas.
5. Conclusions drawn from informal conferences with principals, coordinators, and teachers in the Tyler Public Schools.
6. The findings from a workshop recently conducted at Emmett Scott High School, Tyler, Texas.

The questionnaires, accompanied by explanatory letters, were sent locally to a random sampling of two hundred parents of pupils in the Emmett Scott High School and Emmett Scott Junior High School; to eighty teachers in the entire school system; to twenty-two ministers of various denominations; and to principals of five schools. Letters were sent to one hundred principals of secondary schools chosen by random sampling from across the state. The list of principals chosen for this study was selected from the school directory distributed by the Texas Education Agency, Austin (1955). Cards were enclosed for reply requesting information regarding planned programs of parental education, if any, which were being conducted in the schools of which they were in

charge. Copies of letters, cards, and questionnaires may be seen in the Appendix, Exhibit A.

Visits were made to homes of pupils enrolled in high school homemaking classes, and personal conferences were held with parents to secure their opinions concerning a program of parental education in the Tyler Public Schools.

Anecdotal records of these home visits were kept and carefully preserved for use in the group discussions which were expected to take place later, when and if the program was initiated. All of the information secured from these and various other sources was compiled, tabulated, and studied. It was used later as a basis for suggesting methods of selecting leaders and for suggesting ideas to be used in orienting a planned program of parental education in the public schools of Tyler.

The conferences which were held with the coordinator of Homemaking Education and the principals of the Tyler Public Schools revealed two important facts:

1. That they were interested in the development of the program.
2. That they felt that there was a definite need for a planned program of parental education in the public schools of Tyler.

It was brought out in discussion that their decisions were based on a study of adult needs in Tyler, which had been made by a local homemaking teacher, a recent workshop conducted at Emmett Scott High School, as well as a comparative

study of drop-outs in the two high schools in Tyler, which had been made by a local principal. Discussion of the qualifications of a leader have been given and suggestions have been made for initiating a parental education program, based on the findings.

The interview procedure was used to secure some of the information because it has been found that data collected during informal conversations with parents and observations of the physical and social environment of the home during the visits, reveal an abundance of information which, otherwise might never become known. Moreover, personality, mannerisms, and attitudes of those interviewed might unconsciously be disclosed. An understanding of this type of self-expression would not be possible by use of the questionnaire alone. Furthermore, the interview enabled the writer to follow leads, to take advantage of small clues, and to read between the lines, as it were, ideas and attitudes which were not expressed in words. It has been recognized, however, that the information so gained may be highly subjective, but careful use has been made of it so that it has not influenced too greatly, information gained by more objective means.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred and seventy-five of the three hundred and seven questionnaires circulated were returned. This represents a return of approximately 90 per cent, which for this heterogeneous group is thought to be entirely satisfactory. A survey of these questionnaires revealed some important data.

Practically all of the parents, teachers, ministers and principals were of the opinion that parents wanted and needed special training, which would help them to understand the child, family relationships and community influences affecting the child and the family. Parent education, they felt, should be offered through the Tyler Public Schools and that teachers, other leaders and organizations should help to sponsor the program. Reasons given by them may be found in the Appendix, Exhibit B.

Two hundred and forty or 89 per cent of those persons who returned the form felt that parents should be asked to help in planning the parental education program. They felt also, that the teachers in the public schools should not be the sole leaders, but that other qualified persons and interested community organizations should cooperate in the development of the program. Some such organizations might be

the churches, various clubs, and fraternal organizations, and the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations.

The opinion was almost unanimous that parents, ministers, principals and teachers would cooperate in initiating a parental education program whenever they were called upon to do so; one hundred and twelve or 37 per cent would help to sponsor groups in the church; one hundred and seventy or 41 per cent would help to sponsor groups at school; and seventy-seven or 28 per cent would cooperate in sponsoring groups elsewhere.

It has been the experience of the writer, and likewise expressed by others, that the time and length of a meeting has a definite effect upon the number of persons in attendance, as well as upon their enthusiasm for the business at hand. For that reason the respondents were asked to give some of their ideas as to time and length of proposed meetings.

Numerous suggestions were given for the number of meetings to be held and the time of day or night to schedule meetings. Four, six, eight and ten meetings were suggested as total for the program and the preference of about half of the respondents was for four meetings. They suggested that the meetings should be held at any time between four o'clock in the afternoon, and eight o'clock in the evening. The hour, 7:30 in the evening was selected by the majority, however. The suggested length of meetings was from thirty minutes to

three hours, yet, the one-hour meeting was the choice of 45 per cent of those responding. A small per cent suggested one and one-half hours for the length of meetings.

The majority of the group, therefore, were of the belief that programs of one to one and one-half hours in length, at about 7:30 in the evening would increase the number of parents who might show their interest in the objectives and problems of children and of schools. Ninety-two per cent of the parents and all of the ministers and principals felt that the association of teachers with parents would aid both groups in understanding and in trying to solve their problems. They also agreed that as a result of this association their experiences would be related to more effective understanding of the whole child. It was interesting to note in contrast that only about 67 per cent of the teachers felt this way. Seventy-five per cent of the group was of the opinion that the cooperative interest in parental education would make the community-at-large more conscious of its influences upon the lives of children. It is noteworthy to mention that again, for some unexplained reason, the teachers did not share this opinion unanimously. Among the major resources available to teachers in guiding children are the parents. In fact, parents are perhaps the most valuable resource which teachers have if used effectively.

Seventy-nine per cent of parents of children who were then in school, and all of the ministers and principals

indicated their desire to participate in a planned program of parental education in the schools, while thirty-one per cent of the teachers expressed their desire to participate. It was assumed by the writer that the other teachers failed to indicate a desire to work in the program because many of them were not parents of children who were then enrolled in school.

The respondents gave many reasons for wanting to participate in this program. See Appendix, Exhibit C. On the other hand, it would be interesting to know why such a large number expressed no desire to work in a parental education program. Parents have always helped each other to solve their problems of child-rearing and in the last few years as parents have a little more time away from household duties they have had more time for more discussion with each other about their families. Consequently, many of them wanted to meet together regularly to learn from each other and from others, so as to do the best possible job as parents.

It cannot be assumed that every parent wants outside help in bringing up his children or that he feels that he needs extra training to do so. Many parents do not need outside help and others see it as interference. The parents who do seek help by meeting with others may do so for several reasons. He may be dissatisfied with the way things are going on at home, he may want information on how to establish good family relationships in his family or he may want

reassurance that his children are acting like those in other households. Living with one's children can be an exciting challenge and a rewarding experience if parents know what to expect from them and if parents know what children expect from parents. Sometimes, through simply talking things over, parents gain an understanding of the ways family life may be made more satisfying.

One hundred letters, with card enclosed for reply were sent to principals in a cross-section of the state requesting information concerning planned programs of parental education in schools which were under their supervision. Seventy-two cards were returned. Upon investigation, the data revealed that twenty-two per cent had planned programs, but upon further investigation it was found that these programs consisted of the regular monthly or bi-monthly meetings of the Parent-Teacher Association and special classes which were not explained by those who mentioned them. Forty-five per cent indicated the organization of a Band Parents Club, Clinics, Workshops, Band Mothers Club, and a Community Improvement Club, as forms of activities for parents rather than as programs for parental education. Thirty-three per cent of the principals simply checked "no" without explanation or comment.

The responses from ministers showed that they were wholeheartedly in favor of a program, the purpose of which

was to interest parents in children. Some evidently questioned the advisability of having such a program sponsored by the public schools with the classroom teachers as leaders. The parents, likewise, were noticeably opposed to having teachers to sponsor the parent education program. In fact, the teachers as well as the principals showed evidence of opposition to teachers as leaders.

Another fact worth mentioning was that some teachers felt that parents and teachers would not be aided in trying to understand and solve their problems with their children through such a program of education. This idea was expressed by parents as well however, but by a much smaller per cent. On the other hand, ministers and principals felt that the purpose could be accomplished.

The interviews with parents were meaningful since they were made while supervising home projects and home experiences which pupils were carrying on in connection with the homemaking program. Most of the parents were employed outside the home, hence, the writer usually made advance appointments for visits and conferences with parents through their children who were enrolled in homemaking classes at Emmett Scott High School. This was done, so that a definite time could be set, when it was convenient for parents to be interviewed. Many of the parents' children had studied homemaking for two or more years; consequently there was a

feeling of ease and friendliness and parents were inclined to speak freely and frankly. The questionnaires were given the parents after a thorough explanation. A few questions were asked by some, after which the blanks were filled without hesitation.

A mother and father had this to say: "The workshop that you all had over to the school was just what I needed. Our girl worries us so that we were glad to find answers to somethings that were happening at that time." Another remarked, "You know, it makes me feel better to know that other parents have the same trouble that I have." A grandmother who had been left with the responsibility of rearing two teen-agers said, "I am in favor of anything that will help me raise these children. Everything is so different to what it was when I raised my children. There isn't much that I can do but I will help all I can."

There was no instance where interviewees thought that there should not be a planned program of parental education in the schools, even though a small per cent felt that, due to their hours of employment, they would be unable to take an active part in the program; but, they would attend whenever possible.

The interviews gave the writer an opportunity to give as well as to obtain information, to exchange ideas, and to help to develop certain attitudes on the part of the respondents regarding the school's program. It was revealed that

each time the writer paid a visit to these homes, a feeling of closer friendliness was experienced. This was evidenced by facial expressions and by the greetings which were given. One can learn when there is desirable rapport with the parents because of the attitudes and remarks made by their children.

It was found that there were many resource people in the community whose services could be used in connection with a parental education program, just for the asking. Some of these resource people were teachers who were unable to find employment, former and retired teachers, a sociologist, a counselor, physicians, leaders in church and club activities, and others who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences.

The materials used in this study included professional literature such as: data received from parents, ministers, teachers, principals, coordinators of instruction, books, pamphlets, periodicals, questionnaires, postal cards and studies made by other investigators.

If parental education programs are to be conducive to mental, moral and social improvement they must be:

1. Meaningful, significant, and purposeful to the parents at the time they are engaged in them.
2. They must be valuable in equipping parents with better methods of meeting the needs of their children.

3. They must secure thoroughness of mastery and integrity of effort on the part of each parent.
4. And they must concentrate upon guiding, developing and integrating well-rounded personalities in families.

Enlightening the public on the aspirations of the school in planning a program of parental education is an important factor; for if a school and community are to work together they must think together. Communities need expert help in planning, instituting and directing programs of this kind.

Parents need to know how to meet the needs of their children, how to get greater satisfaction from being a parent and how to develop desirable parent-child relationships.

The findings, as a result of this study, indicate that most parents, ministers, and school personnel who were contacted, believe that a planned program of parental education would serve this need.

The school cannot understand the individual pupil and his needs unless it has some knowledge and understanding of the home and family from which he comes. Likewise, parents cannot fully understand their children unless they know something about the experiences which they are having under school supervision.

It is true that a great majority of pupils in the schools shall become parents and homemakers, and many public schools have assumed the responsibility to help them prepare for these important functions.

The family is the most influential educator in the life of every child. There is actually no adequate substitute for happy family living in promoting the individual's best development. All parents then, are educators in the deepest sense. As such, they need special help and training for their job as do other teachers. Preparation for family life in this country has been provided for by high school courses in social studies, personal problems, and other core courses, as well as home economics. Even though many high school pupils are having school experiences in this area, the great majority of today's parents still have need for additional information and experiences in spite of the increasing number of excellent parental education programs. Many grandparents who are believed to exert great influence on family life, also have much need for help in solving problems. Those parents and grandparents who did not reach high school were not able to receive help in this area.

The task ahead is vast if more and more parents, both present and future, are to rear families which are not only effective as individuals, but who are also efficient in their

conduct of home and family living. Community-wide programs might be an answer to the problem which is presented in trying to teach the pupil, the parents, and the grandparents, efficient child-parent relationships.

Edwin J. Lukas, Director of Civil Rights Program of American Jewish Committee, New York, is of the opinion that compulsory courses in preparation for parenthood should be initiated in public and private schools with the aim of building happy, fully adjusted people and to keep down the kind of behavior that causes trouble for the community and misery for the individual involved.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A LEADER

The qualifications for a leader are related to the kind of program that is being planned and what one hopes to gain from it. It is sometimes true that a group may have to plan its program according to the qualifications of an available leader. The term leader is not synonymous with chairman. It is the leader's job, as the person responsible for the content of the meeting, to use all the resources at his command--his knowledge both of the subject to be discussed, and of the community, as well as the group's interest and participation--to help members to achieve the goals toward which they are working.

For each kind of meeting a different skill may be required of the leader. Each leader, therefore, should be

chosen in relation to the goals of the program and his own specific assignment. If the group plans to feature films, skits, or lectures, the leader's main skill may be that of conducting discussion. If as a leader he is to be both speaker and discussion leader, then he must also know child development and parent-child relations. When one considers the many kinds of situations and the varied interests that may arise in any on-going parent education program, it is desirable that a leader be found who has knowledge in the following areas, yet one may find good leaders of parent education groups with lesser qualifications:

1. Family relationships and the normal development of children.
2. The effect of differing personal backgrounds on the ways in which family and community life may develop.
3. How adults learn, how people react to each other in a group, and how the leader can help them to work together effectively.
4. The purposes and varieties of programs that are possible and useful in parent education, and the appropriate use of the community resources in planning.

To determine the qualifications of a prospective leader when one has no first-hand knowledge, it is advisable to ask him about his background and experiences and for

personal references from others who know of work which he has done in parent education. The educational background of workers in parent education ranges from grade school through post-graduate and professional schools.

SOME CLASSIFICATIONS OF LEADERS

1. The Lay Leader--The person who is not a member of a particular profession. His natural skill in helping a group decide on its program and keep its discussion to the topic. Some times he has had brief periods, ranging from one day to two weeks, as a group leader.
2. The Trained Leader--One who has had extensive training in working with groups of all kinds. Emphasis is likely to be on helping members develop their strengths as group participants.
3. The Professional Leader--A person from one of the special professions working with families (e.g. a psychologist, social worker, teacher, guidance counselor, public health nurse) whose background of information on child development and family relationships is derived from his special training. He may or may not have had experience in working with groups.
4. The Trained Professional Leader--A person from one of the above listed special professions who has had

additional training in working with groups. Some in this group have had specific training as parent educators.

Also important to parent education programs is the contribution of the resource person. He does not function as a leader, but rather as a professional person brought in to the meetings as a speaker or as a consultant to provide information in a particularized area of interest: school psychologist, pediatrician, physician. Their contribution will be that of broadening and deepening the parent's understanding through sharing the knowledge they have gained from special training. (4)

SUGGESTIONS FOR ORIENTING A PROGRAM OF PARENTAL EDUCATION IN THE TYLER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Careful study of the results of the survey which was made to ascertain whether parental education would be acceptable to parents and to all concerned in Tyler and vicinity, showed that a large percentage of all persons investigated agreed that there was a real need for parental education in the public schools of Tyler. The next step would seem to be to secure the official approval of the administrators of the school system.

The following suggestions may be considered as tentative for a parental education program in the Tyler Public Schools:

1. Parental education groups may be organized in each local school through the Parent-Teacher Association which is already well-organized and functioning. A general Planning Committee for the perfection of the groups may be composed of the following persons from each school: the principal, counselor, a teacher, the president of the Parent-Teacher Association, one or more parents and persons living in the community who may be accomplished in some particular area, or who may have had experience in organizing and directing group activities. Some of these persons may be doctors, lawyers, ministers, social workers, county extension agents, leaders of Boy and Girl Scouts of America, YWCA, YMCA, and Campfire; skilled workers as, carpenters, plumbers and any others who are good leaders and/or diligent workers.
2. The Planning Committee from the several schools could then meet together to discuss organizational problems, and to perfect the general organization. The representatives of each Parent-Teacher Association would then take the results of the general organizational meeting to their own PTA for criticisms and approvals, as well as for additional suggestions. The General Planning Committee may suggest a series of workshops, or subjects for panel discussions. The workshop projects and the panel topics may evolve from the results obtained from questionnaires prepared and sent to

parents. The questionnaire might enable the Planning Committee to ascertain projects or panel topics which are, or seem to be, most interesting to parents.

3. Other suggested methods and techniques for meetings are discussion, study-discussion, lecture-discussion, role playing or dramatization, films, and television.
4. Regular, well-planned staff meetings are essential to help group leaders to solve problems, and to give them an opportunity to discuss the development of their programs. The friendly, informal atmosphere of these meetings is designed to strengthen the group leaders and to help them to feel secure.

A suggested list of organizational steps for each school's parental group follows:

1. Select a chairman, a discussion leader, a resource leader, and a recorder.
2. Divide the membership into groups with from six to twelve members in each group, who would help to decide questions considered important for group discussions.
3. A general topic with questions may be planned for group discussions. Five adult interest groups are: Parents of preschool children, parents of elementary school children, parents of adolescents, for expectant

mothers and fathers and new parents, young adults who do not belong to the outer groups.

It has been found to be advantageous for group members to be seated at a large round table or in a circle.

4. Invite resource people who are well-trained in specific fields to add interest and to give experienced guidance. Some colleges that have supplied resource people without charge are Texas, and Butler Colleges, Tyler, Texas; Jarvis College, Hawkins, Texas; Prairie View A and M College, Prairie View, Texas; and Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas.
5. The recorder should state clearly and accurately all conclusions which have been decided upon by the group.
6. It would be well to mimeograph the conclusions reached by the groups after each session and send them to all parents whose children are attending school.
7. Registration for general mass meetings may not be necessary but it is essential for a series of meetings which should have a continuity of thought for beneficial discussions. Generally, a parental organization is a discussion group which does not involve any expenditures. However, many people feel a stronger sense of responsibility if they share in

the program by making a monetary contribution, however small. Each organization should decide for itself whether or not it needs a treasury.

8. A successful organization must adequately publicize its program in advance by preparing a clear statement about the program to be distributed to the local newspaper and radio stations, to schools, churches, and other community agencies. Members may make telephone and written contacts. Posters for a program of civic interest may be posted at strategic points in public places. The number of people one hopes to attract is determined by the extent of the publicity. Program announcements may be sent through the mail or by pupils, to a large number of parents.
9. The first meeting of the over-all committee and the small groups should be most interesting. Advance publicity should give those who attend a knowledge of what to expect. It is important that the person who is presiding be someone who is able to arouse interest with a brief, lively description of the purposes and tentative over-all plans of the program and who can also help the members to feel that they are welcome and that the program was initiated for them. Some techniques should be used to help members and the leaders to become acquainted. Groups often devote the

first meeting to making final plans for their programs and to deciding what subjects they would like to cover.

A group may have to begin in starting a program of parental education, using whatever resources that are at hand, but with the hope that the program may be richer and better in the years ahead. There is a wide difference between the attitude that any parent group is better than nothing and the other extreme of too rigid adherence to specified standards. The growth of any program depends upon the growth of community interest and acceptance. It also depends upon the planning group's ability to keep both its immediate and long-range goals always in mind. As with any community program, what counts is not the modesty of its beginning but the persistency with which people follow avenues of progress. A parental education program may be started by just a few people who may later include others whom they find to be equally interested. Many programs develop from organizations which may sponsor a parent education program for some or all of its members.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this investigation was two-fold: To collect information and use it to help to determine the needs and interests of parents in establishing a program of parental education in the public school in Tyler, Texas; to become sufficiently informed about planned programs of parental education so as to be able to offer suggestions, to direct interested persons to sources of information and to give assistance in developing a program of this type in the Tyler Public Schools.

From the analysis of the data secured from this study, the following conclusions have been reached: That there is a definite need for a planned program of parental education in the Public Schools of Tyler, Texas; that it is evident, according to the findings from the returned questionnaires which were sent to principals across the state, that there were no planned programs of this type in the seventy-seven schools from which responses were received; that valuable information may be furnished and much guidance and assistance may be given by the investigator to planners of this kind of a program in the local public schools or elsewhere; that all experiences were meaningful, purposeful, and significant in establishing desirable rapport with the people contacted;

that an atmosphere of friendliness, cooperation and understanding existed among those who participated in the study. They were enthusiastic and seemed to have a feeling of "belonging."

The personal conferences held during home visitations had a wholesome influence upon both the parents and the investigator in bringing about good, personal relationships. Parents were led, during the interviews, to realize that the influence of the home affects the child's school life as well as the influence of the school affects the child's home life.

It was concluded, also, that officials in urban and rural areas in the Tyler vicinity may be urged to plan parental education programs in schools so as to help parents acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the practice of parenthood; that there was a wide variation of choice as to the meeting interval or time of day for scheduling meetings.

The investigator has become familiar with much and varied materials and their sources, which will be invaluable in teaching and in directing adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All materials have been properly summarized and analyzed and the following recommendations offered:

1. That a planned program of parental education should be initiated at the earliest possible time, in the Tyler Public Schools, Tyler, Texas.
2. That parental education could be a definite part of the school program in the state of Texas and that this step could be initiated by those who plan the curriculum for the schools in the state.
3. That systematic, accurate records will be kept of the meetings as a basis for evaluation (See Appendix, Exhibit D).
4. That parents should be encouraged to help in the development and in the establishment of the programs of parental education.
5. That special efforts should be made to interest fathers, as well as mothers as participants, resource people and as leaders.
6. That different leaders should be used who would bring varied experiences, points of view, and training to the participants in this program. This would make it possible to supply leaders suitable to the needs of the group. It is desirable that efficient community leaders be used, whenever possible.
7. Parents are most interested in learning about their children at the period of development reached by their

own children. Therefore, subject matter dealing with successive stages of development might be offered.

8. That a section in the library of each school might well be developed and maintained with literature of interest to parents and to those who stand in the places of parents. This area should be available to parents the year-round.
9. That there could be renewed emphasis upon parental responsibility for the behavior of their children.

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APPENDIX

EXHIBIT A

[REDACTED]
Tyler, Texas
March 10, 1956

Dear Parents:

I am making a study of parental education which is being offered in various places for the purpose of securing information which may be used in developing such a program for parents of school children in Tyler. "The Function of parent education, as we now see it, is to increase parent's understanding of themselves, of the world they live in, of the problems inherent... in child development."

Enclosed is a group of questions which I am asking you to kindly answer and return to me at your earliest convenience. I assure you that your cooperation is needed and shall be greatly appreciated. Kindly use the stamped, self-addressed envelope for your reply.

You probably have had experiences from which you can draw suggestions which may assist me in planning this study. Please feel free to add them at the end of the page on the information form.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Myrtle B. Spencer
Teacher of Homemaking
Emmett Scott High School
Mrs. E. M. Galloway, Dean
Study Adviser

EXHIBIT B

REASONS GIVEN BY PARENTS--WHY THEY THINK PARENTAL EDUCATION
SHOULD BE OFFERED BY THE TYLER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Parents need to know the needs of their children."

"Parents need to understand the school."

"I believe it would help many."

"A very unusual movement. I hope something will come of it."

"Because we need more learning."

"It would help parents know what the program of the school is like."

"Parents and teachers would learn to understand each other better and certainly do more for the child."

"Parent education would help so much because many parents do not understand their children's problems. This makes it difficult to help solve problems."

"I think this is a wonderful program. I am willing to cooperate."

"It would arouse interest of parents toward training their children and help to prevent delinquency."

"To understand our modern school and our modern children."

"This is the best way to reach the masses."

"This program would benefit the children as well as the parents."

"This is a forward step in making all people feel a part of the program which will help the community."

PRAIRIE VIEW A & M COLLEGE,
PRAIRIE VIEW, TEXAS
February 15, 1956

Information Form Concerning
Developing a Program of Parental Education in Tyler

Mrs. Myrtle B. Spencer, Investigator
Mrs. E. May Galloway, Adviser

Purpose: This information shall be used to help to determine the needs and interests of parents in establishing a program of parental education in Tyler.

Directions: Place an (X) in the blank space after each question to indicate the answer of your choice.

1. Do you think that parents need or want special training which should help them to understand the child, family relationships, and community influences affecting the child and the family? Yes _____ No _____
2. Should parent education be offered through the Tyler Public Schools? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

3. Should parents be asked to help in the planning of such a program? Yes _____ No _____
4. Should the leaders in a program of parental education be the teachers in the local public schools? Yes _____ No _____
5. Should some other person be leaders, as well as the teachers in the public schools? Yes _____ No _____
6. Should interested organizations help as sponsors in such a program with the schools? Yes _____ No _____
7. Would you cooperate in sponsoring a group in your church _____, school _____, organization _____, others _____?
(Check one or more)
8. How many meetings should be planned for the program?
Four _____ Six _____ Eight _____ Ten _____
9. Suggest the time of day _____ or night _____; the length of each meeting: _____ hour _____ minutes.

10. In your opinion, would this program increase the number of parents who might be interested in the objectives and problems of the children and of the schools? Yes _____
No _____
11. Do you believe that such associations of teachers with parents would aid both groups in understanding and in trying to solve their problems? Yes _____ No _____
12. Should these experiences be related to more effective understanding of the whole child? Yes _____ No _____
13. Do you think that cooperative interest in parental education would make the community-at-large more conscious of its influences upon the lives of the children of a community? Yes _____ No _____
14. If you are a parent of children who are now in school, would you care to take part in such a program? Yes _____
No _____
15. Comments:

POSTAL CARD

Do you have a program for parents other than P.T.A.?
Yes _____ No _____

If the answer is yes, please place the name and address of
the person in charge of this program at your school.

Name _____

Address _____

Mrs. Myrtle B. Spencer

Tyler, Texas

EXHIBIT C

RESPONDENTS' BELIEFS REGARDING THIS PROGRAM

"Parent education would help so much because many parents do not understand their children's problems."

"Children would understand that parents are interested in them which would help to influence them to make better progress in school."

"It would give us an opportunity to learn how to understand our teen-age children."

"Parents generally do not have enough insight on children-- how they grow and learn."

"Our children need the benefit of this kind of a program."

"To help us to better understand our children."

"Because my children are enrolled in Tyler Public Schools."

"Parents can take advantage of opportunities that they did not have beforehand."

"Because we need more learning so we can be happy with our children and they can be happy with us."

"I need to get better acquainted with the teachers and other parents who might attend these meetings."

EXHIBIT D

FORM FOR KEEPING RECORD OF ATTENDANCE AT GROUP MEETINGS

Date _____ Meeting No. _____ Name of Group _____

Place _____ Meeting Started at _____ Closed at _____

Chairman _____ Secretary _____ Leader _____

Attendance affected favorably by _____

Unfavorably by _____

Topic _____ Reports by _____

Discussion: Started at _____ Finished at _____ Number
taking part _____

No discussion because of _____

Character of meeting: General discussion _____ Individual
problems _____ Anecdotes _____ Controversy _____

Forced _____ Spontaneous _____ Lively _____

Heated _____ Monopolized by one _____

Amount of discussion: Very little _____ Average _____

Much _____ Very much _____

Remarks: