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The effects of planned parental involvement on the attendance and reading achievement of elementary learning disabled students

Carrie Roseberry

Atlanta University

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THE EFFECTS OF PLANNED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON THE ATTENDANCE AND READING ACHIEVEMENT OF ELEMENTARY LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

BY

CARRIE ROSEBERRY

A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF EDUCATION SPECIALIST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Rationale.—Reading is one of the imperatives of the seventies. Reading programs funded by the federal government provide an added dimension in support of teachers who are trying to improve and develop effective reading programs in the schools. The universally high incidence of reading failures has made it necessary for administrators, teachers and parents to explore numerous avenues in seeking to discover useful strategies and techniques for remedial reading instructors.

The importance for this concern appears evident for reading skills are essential in learning all academic subjects. Cleary states that a student will learn little else in today's world if he does not first learn to read adequately. Also, the personal values of reading cannot be overlooked. The Cleary research indicates that reading involves the whole personality, promising countless personal and social values. She further states that reading provides experiences through which the individual may expand his horizons, identify, extend and intensify his interests and gain deeper understanding of himself, and others.¹

Pioneers in remedial reading identified a group of students whose reading problems seemed irreversible. They labeled this group dyslexia. However, in recent research, children with similar problems have been labeled learning disabled students. Therefore, the responsibility of special education teachers toward launching the student toward successful reading achievement is very great. If they have any professional conscience, they will accept this responsibility and search endlessly for knowledge of what has been accomplished and be prepared to master the most essential and effective means for guiding the student in school.

Two primary social/educational systems set the environment for the growth and development of handicapped children. One is the educational intervention program which is the formal public school, community based or institutional structure. Second is the on-going support system of the family. While these two systems can be approached and treated independently, when they are dealt with simultaneously the expected overall results appear to be a summation of the effects from the two systems. That is, when the parents of handicapped students are trained and able to actively participate in the educational program in the home and in the school setting, achievements gained may be reinforced and sustained.

The crucial role parents play in the development and education of their children has long been recognized and asserted. Recently,

\[\text{2}^{2}\text{Ira J. Gordan, Parent Effectiveness Training (New York: Peter W. Hyden, 1975), p. 25.}\]
empirical studies have not only confirmed this notion, but have further begun to carve out a technology of effective strategies for parents to utilize in educating and managing their children. For example, studies emanating from the behavioral analysis framework have been particularly fruitful as resources for practitioners who attempt to work with students through their parents. In the past, it was unusual programs that made efforts to directly involve parents of the students being served. Parent involvement programs were once viewed as "nice to have but not essential." Research demonstrates, however, that effective parental involvement is, in fact, a main ingredient in long-term effective intervention. For the student and his family, parent involvement in the educational program maximizes the student's chances of achieving his maximum potential.

Parents of handicapped children usually are more familiar with their children than anyone else. However, the parent's background and experience may not provide them the required specialized skills needed for successful training and integrating of their child into the family unit as a participating and non-disrupting member. Many parents of learning disabled (L. D.) children want to actively assist with the development of their children's reading skills but do not have the necessary skills. Therefore, they must be integrated into existing community support structures, and be provided with a training structure which does supply those specialized management and child care skills particular to the needs of learning disabled children.
The assumption that parent education can make a meaningful contribution to child development is a long standing one. Programs for L. D. students have traditionally included parents in educational meetings and individual parent–teachers conferences, as well as home visitations. In these and other interactions with professionals, parents have generally been given the role of receivers of information and advice from experts. The new view of parental involvement recognizes that parents do make a unique contribution to the affective and cognitive development of their children. This contribution stems from their intimate interaction with these children in their role as informal instructors.

It is apparent that the school must do more than educate the learning disabled student, it must deal with the whole student, which includes his parents, in order for the task of education to be effective. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important for the professional to identify roles parents can play in the education of their children.

Purpose of the Study.—The purpose of this study was to obtain satisfactory answers to the following questions:

1. Does planned parental involvement make a difference in the school attendance of learning disabled students as measured by the Roseberry Recording Instrument? (See Appendix A.)

2. Does planned parental involvement make a difference in the reading achievement of learning disabled students as measured by the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test?

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Need for the Study.—Elementary age learning disabled students have two major school problems, attendance and reading according to the research findings of Ensminger.\(^4\) The school attendance for L. D. students is significantly lower than students of comparable age. One of the major causes cited was inability to read which contributed to poor self-images and school phobia. Ensminger's study recommends that further research is needed in this area to identify variables which may contribute to positive changes in attendance and reading remediation for this identified group.\(^5\)

Too long, professionals have dealt with the learning disabled student's school problems, but have ignored the importance that planned parental involvement with these two problems can play in eliminating attendance problems and remediating many of the student's school problems. The writer believes that the involvement of parents in the school program of L. D. students is vital to the total development of the students.

Statement of the Problem.—This study is concerned with exploring planned parental involvement and the effects it will have on the attendance and reading achievement of twenty learning disabled students enrolled in W. J. Scott Elementary School.

Hypotheses.—This study will confirm or reject the following null hypotheses:


\(^5\)Ibid., p. 35.
1. There is no significant difference in the attendance of students whose parents are involved in the planned parental involvement program when compared with students whose parents are not involved in the planned parental involvement program.

2. There is no significant difference in the reading achievement of students whose parents are involved in the planned parental involvement program when compared with students whose parents are not involved in the planned parental involvement program.

**Research Procedures.**—The following steps constituted the operational procedures of this study:

1. Permission to conduct this study was secured from the Research Committee and Principal.

2. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test was administered to subjects in both experimental and control groups.

3. The Roseberry Recording Instrument was used to collect data on students in the experimental and control groups.

4. The Roseberry Recording Instrument was also used to collect parent responses to homework assignments.

5. Data was statistically analyzed using the "t" test at .05 level of confidence.

6. Summary, recommendations and conclusions were drawn on the basis of the findings.

**Definition of Terms.**—The terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. **Special Education**—All children and youth who are eligible for the general education program, pre-school education, or who have special educational needs and three- and four-year-old children who are either physically, mentally or emotionally handicapped or perceptually or linguistically deficient shall also be eligible for special education services.
2. Planned Parental Involvement—Parental involvement as defined in this study is parents who support regular school attendance and re-enforce the reading activities of the planned parental involvement program by assisting students with homework assignments.

3. Learning Disabilities—Learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

4. Parent—A natural mother or father, an adoptive mother or father, or legally appointed guardian.

Description of Instruments.—The instruments used in this study were as follows:

1. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) is designed to assess intelligence on a global basis. The popularity of the WISC seems to relate to the fact that, in addition to the Full Scale I. Q., this test yields a Verbal I. Q. and a Performance I. Q. Although the reliability of these two scores vary in relation to the age level of the subject, the relative scores (the degree and type of differences) on the Performance and Verbal sections are of value in making certain predictions. The Wechsler is also composed of a series of sub-tests in both the verbal and the performance sections.

2. The Roseberry Recording Instrument was used to collect school attendance data, workshop attendance of parents involved in the study, and parent responses to homework assignments.

3. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Forms A and B were developed to give a measure of achievement in the areas of reading. The Word Identification Test, which consists of 125 items and the Word Comprehension Test, which consists of 70 items were the sub-tests utilized in this study.
Organization of the Study.—This study utilized twenty learning disabled students at W. J. Scott Elementary School which is a part of the Atlanta Public School System. The students in the class were first equated on the basis of I. Q., age, and number of years in the Learning Disability Program. The students were then randomly selected for placement into two treatment groups. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference in intelligence of each group by use of the "t" test.

This particular study has as its focus school attendance and reading achievement. The school attendance record was the basis used to evaluate school attendance on the Roseberry Recording Instrument. The experiment was carried out in a classroom for children with learning disabilities.
CHAPTER II
SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are very few books and periodicals on the effects of parental involvement on the attendance and reading achievement of learning disabled students. The ones available are mostly limited to parental involvement with pre-school students. The writer, in using this material, adopted it to meet the needs of parental involvement of learning disabled students, and specifically the ones in question at W. J. Scott Elementary School.

People with handicapping conditions in the past were either ignored or rejected. Even recently individuals with handicaps were considered to be victims of a cruel twist of fate, but persons to be avoided nevertheless. 6

In any society, being different can be dangerous. This in itself creates a problem for parents of learning disabled students. Therefore, before parents are able to help the learning disabled student, they must first be able to cope with differences of the student.

Helping parents to cope with frustration is as important as teaching students how to cope with frustrations and failures, because it is believed by the writer that appropriate coping skills indicate

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good mental health, enhance self-concept, and improve reading achievement.

Although students with handicaps are different from the norm in many ways, parents must be made aware that they are not different in all ways, so ways must be developed that will give learning disabled students a sense of worth and importance. There still remains to be a great deal of work needed in this area. According to McNamara and McNamara, "Developing public awareness and understanding about handicapping conditions has been a slow process." Therefore, the professional, with the parents, must devise some means whereby the learning disabled student is afforded every opportunity to develop as fully as possible.

Another problem encountered is setting up times to talk to parents. This can be a real problem, particularly if both parents work, but its one of the most important aspects of a good program operation. Communication with parents should begin even before a student is enrolled in the special program. A teacher or staff member should visit a student's home to get acquainted with the family.

Once a student is enrolled, you'll find it valuable to talk with family members when they bring the student to school or pick him up. Encourage parents to come early or drop in during the day so they can observe their children. These informal contacts give parents and other family members a chance to see the student in action—this is especially

7Ibid., p. 86.
important for the families of learning disabled students who may see their child doing things they didn't know he was capable of doing.

Jerome Rosner states that approximately three hours of a student's school day in the primary grades is assigned to instruction in the basic skills - reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. If the student's class consists of twenty-five children it means that, on the average, his teacher can give each student approximately seven minutes of individual attention - that is, if no time at all is spent on group instruction. However, almost all teachers teach to groups. As such, the teacher has even less than seven minutes per day for each child.

Children are supposed to learn from group instruction, and most of them do. Unfortunately, the students we are concerned with do not. These students need something different. Rosner says it is a rare parent who cannot find at least thirty minutes a day to work with his or her child individually. By spending that thirty minutes each day with the student, the parent can give him more than six or seven times the individual attention he can get from his teacher in a regular classroom. It is bound to be helpful, if the parent does the right things at the right times.

The amount of time a parent spends at home in formal remediation, should depend upon how well the parent and the student can handle formal

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9Ibid., p. 15.
work together at that stage. Some parents are able to work well with their children at certain points, and trying to work formally with them at other times was almost disastrous.\textsuperscript{10} According to Haring, "Many parents don't work well with their own children because they become disappointed and impatient with their efforts."\textsuperscript{11} If the parent is one of those parents, don't feel that the parent is failing or that he or she has to work with the student because all the other parents they meet at the "gross motor" program say that they work with their offspring two hours daily. Relax, most of them probably are exaggerating. Furthermore, many probably work poorly with their children, doing them a great disservice.

The amount of time spent in reading remediation with the student should also depend on how much can be handled emotionally. If one is high-strung, pressure-sensitive, or easily upset, the remedial demands should take that into account. Dispensers of treatment techniques rarely do consider such factors, so the parent must.\textsuperscript{12}

While reading remediation is important, the home should be a sanctuary for the student. Everyone needs a place where he can go with a promise of warmth, acceptance, and understanding. The learning disabled student's need is even more profound. There the most primary goal would seem to be to insure that the home is a relaxed and pleasant


\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 325.

\textsuperscript{12}Jerome Rosner, p. 42.
place, a source of strength to the student. It should not shield the student from the world but give the student the courage to cope with it. To parent a learning disabled child is to shoulder an added burden of hurt, disappointment, and frustration. It demands of a parent maturity, involvement, and fortitude. Their reactions are intensified; each slight toward their offspring cuts them deeply; each kind gesture makes for lifelong appreciation.

The parent who, by word and deed, expresses an investment in learning and a genuine and benevolent interest in his child's acquisition of skill and knowledge is likely to see joy and achievement in school. On the other hand, those parents who for whatever reason convey a distrust of the school and its teachers, a disrespect for or a disinterest in education, and attitudes of "look at me, I never finished grade school" or "it's not what you know but who," often find a similar disinterest in their children, whose academic performance is frequently poor.13

It is virtually essential that there be a commonality of goals between a student's family and those professionals who work with a student outside his family. One aim of work with parents is clearly to insure that there is agreement about goals.

Parents may approach a helping situation with different attitudes. They may believe that they have very little to offer and are helpless. They may look to the professional for direction and full responsibility, 

or view all helpers with suspicion and anger. Parents who present themselves as being inadequate may be seeking advice and guidance or they may be testing the resourcefulness of the helper. Focusing on some particular appropriate interaction with their child and commenting how the parent seemed to sense his needs very well, or the parent seem to be saying that he enjoys it when he or she does that and the parent sounds as if he does too, or simply that sounds good may be very supportive and helpful.

When parents are hostile or skeptical, it is better to bring their feelings into the open rather than attempt to placate them. Often parents of children with learning disabilities have been frustrated and disappointed by others. If the professional recognizes these feelings and lets the parent know by saying something like, that must have been very disappointing, the parents will probably recall their anger about the lack of help elsewhere, and it may help them relate their feelings. This gesture conveys to them that the helper is willing to listen to the frustrations of the past. Allowing parents to give a complete history in their own way and at their own pace and giving them specific opportunities to present some of their child's assets will help to convince the parents that the worker is really interested in their opinions, ideas, and observations.14

Since so much depends on the quality of the initial contact with the parent, it is helpful to use the initial visit to simply

stage." Reliable information exchanged requires a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Parents are not likely to offer maximum information without a solid relationship, and they are certainly not likely to accept professional opinions or suggestions unless they trust the person making the suggestions. People do not listen well if they are upset by a situation. It is often remarkable how much can be accomplished by patient, thoughtful, empathic efforts to improve the communication pattern between parents and professionals.

R. Warburton Miller and Joyce Larayne Miller says the majority of parents with whom you come in contact, regardless of whether their child has become a special case or not, will be female. Fathers of elementary school students tend to delegate to their wives the responsibility of the children. This includes coping with school problems. Even where a father's interest is high, work commitments often keep him from parent–teacher conferences scheduled during his work day.15

To encourage the father of a child who is learning disabled to attend parent–teacher conferences, it may be necessary to schedule a late afternoon or evening appointment. Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings are positive ways to enlist the interest and cooperation of a father.

Mothers of learning disabled students often feel trapped or caught in the middle. They respond to the most urgent demand. For

example, a mother who has a parent conference at 3:30 P.M. may have
to take care of her three-year-old with a cut foot at 3:00 P.M.
She may arrive late, or not at all.

The professional's relationship with parents, particularly the
mother, will be less frustrating and more rewarding if she allows for
inconsistencies and omissions, and at the same time maintain her own
planned schedule. In other words, do the best job possible with the
time, the facilities, and the cooperation that is given you.

The professional may discover, or have reason to suspect, that
the behavior patterns in the household adversely affect the learning
disabled student. Whether the circumstances are abnormal or merely
inadequate, for all practical purposes, the professional is powerless
to change the student's home environment. Therefore, the professional
must work with a current situation as it exists, and with the parents
as they are — human beings trying to survive in the environment in which
they find themselves.

Thomas P. Cooke further states that our nation's schools should
develop programmatic provisions for parental involvement and partici-
pation in many and varied school activities. This suggestion is
supported by ten postulates, gleamed from the educational and psychologi-
cal literature, which justify the assumption by parents of their right-
ful position of sovereignty over the educational lives of their children.

1. Involved parents can do a great deal toward providing
support systems for one another. They may assist one

16 Ibid., p. 31.
another with knowledge, skills, encouragement and the strength in numbers necessary to combat bureaucracies, insensitive social systems, and recalcitrant social service agencies.

2. Parental involvement may serve as a partial solution to the shortage of competent and dedicated paraprofessionals in the helping professions—a situation which is likely to continue so long as generalists are trained to fill roles requiring specialized (but sometimes mundane) functioning.

3. Parental involvement and activism in educational systems should serve to maximize intrinsic consumer satisfaction at a time of widespread public dissatisfaction with governmental and educational agency functioning.

4. Educational strategies and technologies now exist, although at a rather embryonic stage of development, which can be implemented by supervised parents to move principles developed in educational laboratories into homes and communities.

5. Parental involvement seems to decrease the financial cost of reading remediation to society in the long run. Children oppositional to school and social requirements with parents who are unable to assist in modifying such difficulties frequently do not become productive citizens in maturity. Rather, they are prone to develop psychiatric disturbances.

6. The discipline of applied behavior analysis has provided the insight that the behavior of children is shaped and maintained to meet the requirements of an environmental context. Therefore, if educators wish to modify reading, attendance, dispositions, habits or other areas of performance, the logical place to intervene is with the individuals most pervasive in children's lives—namely parents.

7. A substantial body of research has shown that the period of development from eighteen months to three years is of profound and lasting developmental significance. In order to provide comprehensive educational activities to children of that age, parents need to be involved, at least under our current system of public education.

8. Parents who learn to teach their children reading skills at an early stage of development have been shown to retain their skills and apply it over extended periods of time with other children.
9. Parents who develop skills in reading instruction and interpersonal interaction with their children have proven likely to share their knowledge with fellow parents.

10. Parental involvement in the education of their children is further justified, since, from our society's perspective, parents are both morally and legally responsible for their children's performance, behavior, and development.

The ten postulates do not function in isolation, but in interaction. Together, they seemingly constitute a convincing statement justifying the assumption by parents of their rightful involvement in the educational lives of their children. With the increased emphasis placed on providing appropriate educational services for handicapped students and on mainstreaming these students to the least restrictive environment, perhaps at no time has there been a greater need for the parental involvement of learning disabled students.

Implications from federal legislation suggest the involvement of parents at every level of the student's educational program. As a result, parent education will take many new directions. However, a need for three emphasis appears certain. The first is a more accurate conceptualization of the ramifications of the student's disability and various likely resultant handicaps. Second, there is a need to train parents in appropriate reading skills to increase the capabilities of parents to assist with homework assignments with their handicapped children in the home. Third, there is need for developing the parent

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into an efficient teacher aide, since most children spend a larger percentage of their waking hours at home rather than the school program.

Two primary social/educational systems set the environment for the growth and development of handicapped children. One is the educational intervention program which is the formal public school community based on institutional structure. Second is the on-going support system of the family. While these two systems can be approached and treated independently, when they are dealt with simultaneously the expected overall results appear to be a summation of the effects from the two systems.¹⁸ That is, when the parents and siblings of the learning disabled students are trained and enabled to actively participate in the educational program in the home and in the school setting, achievements gained may be reinforced and sustained concurrent with and after the termination of the program; and provide an appreciation by the family of the student's potential.

Parents of the learning disabled student usually are more familiar with their child than anyone else. However, the parent's background and experience rarely provides them the required specialized skills needed for successful training and integrating of their child into the family unit as a participating and non-disrupting member. Many parents want to actively assist with the development of their children's reading skills but must be integrated into existing community support structures,

and be provided with a training structure which do not supply those specialized reading skills particular to the needs of the learning disabled student.

No longer can the parent involvement component be viewed as simply a nice adjunct to an educational program. In the past, it was the unusual program that made efforts to directly involve and train the parents of the children being served. Parent training programs were once viewed as the frosting on the cake. Research demonstrates, however, that effective parent involvement is, in fact, a main ingredient in long term effective early childhood intervention. Bronfenbrenner states that the involvement of the child's family as an active participant is critical to the success of any intervention, but appears to erode fairly rapidly once the program ends. In contrast, the involvement of the parents as partners in the enterprise provides an ongoing system which can reinforce the effects of the program while it is in operation, and help to sustain them after the program ends.19

In too many studies significant gains have been made by students in intervention programs only to be "washed out" after the intensive center or home based program ended and the children entered school or remained at home. One of the key variables in changing these sad and costly results appears to be the effective training and involvement of parents.

The crucial role parents play in the development and education of their children has long been recognized and asserted. Recently, empirical studies have not only confirmed this notion, but have further begun to carve out a technology of effective strategies for parents to utilize in educating and managing their children. For example, studies emanating from the behavioral analysis framework have been particularly fruitful as resources for practitioners who attempt to work with students through their parents. In the past, it was an unusual program that made efforts to directly involve and train parents of the students being served. Parent training programs were once viewed as "Nice to have but not essential."\(^{20}\) Research demonstrates, however, that effective parent training and parental involvement is, in fact, a main ingredient in long-term effective intervention.

Gorham states that there is increasing evidence that a child's educational progress is accelerated when teachers and parents work in close partnership—a re-discovery of "homework," though at a much more advanced stage. Homework in its early form was practice, study, and writing assignments for the children in a class, with parental supervision limited to making sure that the children spent time on the assignment. Now it is more than that: It is individualized and it calls for active parental involvement as well as supervision. Parents

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\(^{20}\text{Ibid.}, p. 6.\)
must be involved in making plans, implementing them, determining if they are working, helping to make needed modifications in the plans, and communication about plans must be a two way street in that the teacher keeps the parents informed about its progress and vice versa.  

In Davis and McGinnis' study on attendance, they indicated that school attendance among exceptional children was a problem due to poor academic achievement. It was further emphasized that it must be remembered, however, that factors other than lack of achievement in academic areas may also affect attendance. For example, illness, or the demands of one's family might prevent school attendance. Therefore, further research in this area is needed to be of significance to this population of students.

In yet another study on attendance, according to the research findings of Ensminger, elementary age learning disabled students have two major school problems, attendance and reading. The school attendance for learning disabled students is significantly lower than students of comparable age. One of the major causes cited was the inability to read which contributed to poor self-images and school phobia. Ensminger's study recommends that further research is needed in this area to identify variables which may contribute to positive changes in attendance and reading remediation for this identified group.

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23 Eugene S. Ensminger, p. 34.
For the student and his family, parent training is an essential ingredient in determining the student's successful placement in the home as well as school setting. In addition, parent training programs can enable parents to acquire skills needed to cope with the student in the home setting thereby facilitating the student's adjustment in the school setting. Parental involvement in the educational program maximizes the student's chances of achieving his maximum potential.

**Summary of Related Literature.**—The review of related literature can be summarized as follows:

1. Parents of a learning disabled student have more responsibility for their child over a significantly longer period of time than parents of a normal child. They need teaching skills that parents of a normal child need not necessarily possess.

2. Parents know their child better than anyone else ever will, thus parents can serve as a vital resource center to staff in the area of functional program objectives for the student that will be useful in his own unique environment.

3. There has been the acknowledged program of transfer of learning from the classroom to the home. Thus, it is vitally important that there is a planned consistency between the educational program and the home.

4. Studies have shown that parent training was of benefit not only for the target student but also for the siblings. This indicates that parents are able to generalize these learned skills, thus making them better parent-teachers of all children.

5. Parents can accelerate the student's rate of reading. It has been demonstrated that a systematic program by the parents in conjunction with a school program will almost double the rate of acquisition of reading skills.

6. Parents, if knowledgeable about the program their child is receiving, can be the best advocate. Many policy changes and laws are a direct result of parent advocacy.
7. The individual differences of parents and families obviously need to be taken into account in any parent involvement program.

8. Studies have shown that school attendance for learning disabled students is significantly lower than students of comparable age. One of the major causes cited was the inability to read which contributed to poor self-images and school phobia.
CHAPTER III
PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction.—This section includes general procedures and organizational framework for selection of the subjects, description of parents, method of research, informing parents of the study, meeting reminders, educational workshops, and research design.

General Procedure.—The methodology and procedure employed in this study were as follows:

1. Twenty-nine and ten-year-old subjects enrolled in the Learning Disabilities Program were identified. These subjects were equated on the basis of their I.Q., age, and number of years in the L.D. program.

2. Two different experimental treatment groups were established.

3. Subjects were randomly assigned to the experimental and control group.

4. Workshops were organized for parents of experimental group.

5. Parents of subjects in the experimental group were informed of the study.

6. Method for evaluating reading achievement for each group was identified.

7. School attendance records for each group were organized.

8. Pre-test measures were administered to both groups.

9. Parents of students in experimental group participated in the Planned Parental Involvement Program.

10. Subjects were instructed following specific individual education programs.
11. After six weeks, post-test measures were administered to both groups.

12. Statistical analysis of test results were conducted in order to test null hypotheses generated for this study.

Selection of the Subjects.—The subjects for this study were drawn from a population of learning disabled elementary school students at W. J. Scott Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia. The subjects were utilized by using I. Q., age, and number of years in the program. The age of the students ranged from nine to ten years. The length of time of the students in the L. D. program ranged from one to two years. The I. Q.'s of students involved in the program ranged from eighty-six to ninety-one. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children was the measure used for determining I. Q.'s, which was administered by the school psychologist. Twenty students, sixteen ten-year-olds, and four nine-year-olds were utilized in this study. Subjects were then randomly selected for placement into one of the two treatment groups. Random assignment made more defensible the assumption of equality of each experiment group in that every subject had equal opportunity to be placed in each group. A control group was used to provide data for a comparison with the scores of the experimental group.

Description of Parents.—The ten mothers of subjects involved in the experimental group were between the ages of twenty-six and forty. The educational level of this group ranged from high school drop-out to high school graduate. The ten mothers of students involved in the control group were between the ages of twenty-eight and forty-two. The educational level of this group ranged from high school drop-out to high school graduate.
Method of Research.—The method of research employed was the experimental design, using an experimental and a control group of subjects. The instruments used in the collection of data were as follows:

1. The WISC was administered by the school psychologist to the twenty subjects involved in the study. The WISC is designed to assess intelligence on a global basis with children of ages six and up, and is one criterion used in diagnosing children with learning disabilities.

2. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests—Forms A and B were administered to the experimental and control groups by the writer. The two forms are essentially equivalent in range and distribution of item difficulties, they may be used interchangeably at any level. In cases where the user wishes to retest subjects following a short period, the use of the alternate form of the test is recommended since some of the tests may show a practice effect. The Word Identification Test consists of a set of 150 words ranging in difficulty from the first words presented in typical beginning reading programs to words of above average difficulty for superior students in the twelfth grade. The easier items (grade three level of difficulty and below) were selected mainly from an analysis of the vocabulary introduced in seven basal reading programs from the first preprimer through the third reader. The more difficult items were drawn from several sources but mainly utilized the Thorndike-Lorge list. The subject's task in this test is to name the word.

The Word Comprehension Test contains 70 items designated to measure a subject's knowledge of word meanings. An analogy format, each analogy consisting of a double pair of words, was chosen for the purpose of this test. The subject's task is to read the first pair of words in an analogy, then read the first word of the second pair, and tell the examiner a word which would appropriately complete the analogy.

3. The Roseberry Recording Instrument was formulated by the writer for recording attendance of subjects in the experimental group.
The data collected by these instruments were analyzed statistically by computing the "t" ratios and compared at the .05 level of confidence.

ORGANIZATION OF PLANNED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Informing Parents of the Study.—One approach was used in informing parents of the purpose of this study. The parents were informed that a study would be initiated in order to expose parents to basic reading skills necessary in the education of their children. The parents were asked to attend two intensive workshops on specifically assigned Monday afternoons for the purpose of learning reading skills that could be used with their children at home. Attendance at each workshop session was encouraged.

Meeting Reminders.—Parents were reminded of workshop meetings in the following way: The Friday before the Monday meeting, School Happy Grams were sent home. (See Appendix B.)

Educational Workshops.—Parents of subjects in the experimental group were exposed to two intensive workshops in which they were given skills development in the following areas:

Workshop I - Subjects were active participants in completing word meaning and word identification activities to be used at home with their children. They were also involved in viewing a filmstrip which demonstrated activities in word meaning and word identification activities. (See Appendix C.)
Workshop II - The subjects were involved in follow-up activities of the previous workshop; this allowed the writer to get feedback of interaction between mother and child, and to introduce additional activities. The subjects were actively engaged in reading exercises utilizing the Hoffman Reader for the purpose of follow-up activities to be used with their children at home. Subjects were also engaged in making flashcards, and phonogram wheels to be used at home with their children. (See Appendix D.)

Research Design.—The twenty subjects selected for use in the study were assigned to one of the two groups designated as control and experiment groups. The remaining steps then followed:

1. Subjects were pre-tested using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test - Form A. The testing procedure was accomplished by use of standardized directions and administered by the writer. Standardized procedures were employed to assure uniformity of testing conditions.

2. School attendance records were recorded on a daily basis for a total of six weeks.

3. Subjects in each group were taught sixty minutes daily, five days per week.
   a. Control and experimental students in the program received the instruction their individual prescriptions designated.
   b. Students in the experimental group received homework assignments four days a week, Monday through Thursday.
   c. School Happy Grams were sent home to parents reminding them to sign homework assignments. The signatures were indications that parents had assisted with homework assignments.
4. At the end of the planned parental involvement period, subjects were retested using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test - Form B. Procedures were identical to those employed in the pre-test.

5. The data collected were analyzed statistically by computing the "t" ratios at the .05 level of confidence to test for significant difference.

6. Data were compiled and presented in description form.

7. Conclusions and recommendations were presented on the basis of the data obtained.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter reports the results of the statistical analysis of the data related to the study. The data were the results of the pre and post-test responses and school attendance of twenty learning disabled subjects enrolled at W. J. Scott Elementary School.

The data collected were treated statistically by computing a "t" ratio and comparing it at the .05 level of confidence. All subjects were tested to determine the level of reading achievement. The results were analyzed to test the null hypotheses.

Evaluation of the Hypotheses.—In testing the hypotheses of this study, the means were computed and analyzed for each of the measures employed in the pre and post-test conditions and school attendance for both of the treatment groups. Table I presents a summary of the means obtained and the differences between mean I. Q. scores of each treatment group. A summary of the results of the "t" test is also presented and found to be non-significant at .05 level of confidence, indicating that there was no significant difference in intelligence. A summary of the reading achievement of the experimental and control groups as measured by the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests — Forms A and B, is summarized in Table II. The statistics presented in Table II would appear most relevant to reading achievement and the effectiveness of planned parental involvement of reading instruction.
employed. Table III presents a summary of the school attendance of the experimental and control groups as measured by the Roseberry Recording Instrument. A summary of the results of the "t" test is also presented and found to be non-significant at .05 level of confidence, indicating that there was no significant difference in school attendance of both treatment groups.

The "t" test was used to test for significant differences between learning gains of both treatment groups. The results of further mean compilation indicated that the mean score for the control group on the pre-test was 1.99 and on the post-test measure 2.06. For the ten subjects in the experimental group the mean pre-test score on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test was 2.2 and on the post-test measure 2.52.

It was also indicated by statistical analysis that the mean gain in reading achievement for the experimental group was found to be significant at .05 level of confidence. In reference to the control group, the progress in reading achievement was not great enough to show significant gains when the "t" test was computed at .05 level of confidence. Evaluation of the mean and "t" scores indicated that learning disabled students instructed through the planned parental involvement program made greater gains in reading achievement than those students not involved in the planned parental involvement program.
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Table I

COMPARISON OF MEAN I.Q. SCORES OF SUBJECTS AS OBTAINED FROM THE WECHSLER INTELLIGENCE SCALE FOR CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Md</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

.05 Level of Confidence

The obtained differences between mean I.Q. of the experimental and control groups were .06. However, when the data were treated statistically, a "t" score of 0.93 was obtained. The "t" score of 0.93 was found to be non-significant at .05 level of confidence. Therefore, indicating that both groups were fairly equated in intelligence by the data presented in the table.

In determining the reading achievement progress of each treatment group from the time of initial testing, the post-test was administered. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Forms A and B were used as a measure of reading achievement. Table II shows an analysis of the reading achievement of both treatment groups.
Table II

COMPARISON OF MEAN PRE AND POST-TEST SCORES OF SUBJECTS AS OBTAINED ON THE WOODCOCK READING MASTERY TEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>&quot;t&quot; Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>2.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

.05 Level of Confidence

The "t" test was utilized to test for significant difference between pre and post-test scores of both treatment groups.

As the data in Table II reveal, "t" was not significant when compared at the .05 level of confidence, indicating that there was not a statistically significant difference in the pre and post-test scores of subjects in the control group. Analysis further indicates that the learning behavior level of the control group did not significantly improve following the pre-test.

Table II also shows an analysis of scores of the experimental group. As the data in Table II reveal, "t" was significant when compared at the .05 level of confidence, indicating that there was a statistically significant difference in the pre and post-test scores of the subjects in the experimental group. Further analysis reveal that the learning behavior level of the control group using the
planned parental involvement program showed enough gain in reading achievement to be significant at the .05 level of confidence, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis at the .05 level of confidence.

In determining the school attendance record of each treatment group, as measured by the Roseberry Recording Instrument, Table III shows an analysis of the school attendance of both treatment groups.

Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Days Present</th>
<th>Percent Days Present</th>
<th>Possible Number of Attendance Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

.05 Level of Confidence

To determine the school attendance of both treatment groups the number of days present for the control group was 289, and the percent of days present was 96.3%. The number of days present for the experimental group was 294, and the percent of days present was 98.0%. When making a comparison of the "t" test for each group, it was found to be non-significant at .05 level of confidence, indicating that there was no significant difference in school attendance of both treatment groups.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary.—This study was designed to add to the limited research data available on planned parental involvement of learning disabled students. The hypotheses was designed to provide research evidence concerning the effectiveness of planned parental involvement as a method for improving school attendance and reading instruction.

The analysis of this research design was accomplished by computation of the "t" test in order to determine significance of school attendance and pre and post-test measures in the experimental and control groups.

The subjects for this study were twenty elementary learning disabled students. The Roseberry Recording Instrument and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests — Forms A and B were the instruments used to collect data for this study. The subjects were initially evaluated in terms of I. Q., length of time in the learning disability program, and age. From these groups twenty subjects were randomly assigned to the two treatment groups.

The experimental group consisted of those students whose parents were involved in the planned parental involvement program. This group was pre-tested on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test — Form A according to standardized procedures. Individual prescriptions were compiled for
each of the ten subjects according to the needs designated by test results. The control group was pre-tested in the same manner as the experimental group, individual prescriptions were compiled for each of the ten subjects according to the needs designated by test results, but their parents were not involved in the planned parental involvement program. The instrument used for evaluation of reading achievement for both groups was the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test - Form B. School attendance data was recorded for both treatment groups utilizing the Roseberry Recording Instrument.

The data collected were treated statistically by computing a "t" ratio and comparing it at the .05 level of confidence resulting in the rejection of null hypothesis two which states: There is no significance difference in the reading achievement of students whose parents are involved in the planned parental involvement program when compared with students whose parents are not involved in the planned parental involvement program. However, the gain in achievement of the control group was not great enough to show significant gains. The school attendance data also showed no significant difference in the two treatment groups.

Implications.—The analysis and interpretation of the data in this study appears to justify the following implications:

1. Since attendance and reading problems are constantly plaguing the Learning Disability Teacher, knowledge of planned parental involvement programs will greatly benefit Learning Disability Teachers and their students.
2. The various factors which influence parental involvement can be insurmountable barriers if they are allowed to persist on a sub-standard level which works continually to the disadvantage of the students.

3. By providing parent workshops and parental involvement in school related activities, the school can increase the learning behavior levels of learning disabled students.

Recommendations.—The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of planned parental involvement as a method of improving school attendance and reading of learning disabled students. This was done in order to add to the available information and to provide data that would be useful in judging the effectiveness of the planned parental involvement program as a method of improving attendance and reading achievement.

The information gained from this study points to a definite need for parental involvement in reading remediation. The study also points to the need for immediate implementation of these techniques in Learning Disability Classrooms. This implementation in the L. D. Classroom can only be accomplished by acquainting teachers with now and innovative techniques for parental involvement.

From the data provided in this study, the specific recommendations are presented:

1. The Learning Disability Classroom should be utilized by parents as a means of exposing them to the necessary specialized skills needed for instructing their children.

2. The L. D. individualized educational programs should be used as a means of improving reading skills.
3. All Learning Disability Teachers should become more familiar with techniques of planned parental involvement programs due to the high incidence of reading failures of L. D. students.

4. More research is needed in the area of planned parental involvement and the effects it will have on the attendance and academic achievement of learning disabled students.
CONCLUSIONS

Parents experience both joys and problems in living with their children and in watching them grow. Families with learning disabled children have more problems to face and struggle through than other families. The Learning Disability Teacher should have some understanding of these problems, and be willing to make the necessary changes in order to work with these families.

Common to most parents of learning disabled children, is the difficulty of locating services and programs to meet their needs. Therefore, parental involvement programs need to be developed to meet the needs of this unique group. It would be most efficient and effective if the early learning in the home prepared learning disabled students for the elementary school. Unfortunately, some parents do not possess the background and experience necessary to provide them with the required specialized skills needed for instructing their children. Planned parental involvement programs should be provided for parents who want to actively assist with the development of their children's reading skills, because parents do make a unique contribution to the affective and cognitive development of children.

The schools must recognize the complexity of the educational problems of learning disabled students. These problems cannot be solved by some single change such as a new textbook, a more favorable
teacher-pupil ratio, or a teaching machine. The basic problem is to start with the student where he is and include his parents in a carefully developed sequential program to bring him to a level of his maximum potentials. The school is not regarded as the agency for the solution of all social ills of a society. However, we do look to the schools to provide a setting in which learning disabled students can learn under as nearly ideal conditions as possible.¹

Some of the students in our learning disabled classrooms are endowed with high capabilities. At present, many of these students leave school early, discouraged by disappointing experiences. They quit before receiving the training which would permit them to become independent citizens. This is frustrating to them and wasteful to society. By involving parents as partners in the educational enterprise, the task of education is certain to be more effective. The school must educate for enough flexibility in the learning disabled student's outlook to encourage him to expect assistance from parents and teachers in his quest for knowledge. This is another way of saying that education of L. D. students must be reasonably well into the prevailing social structure - in this case a changing one - or result in maladjustment of students.²

While we look ahead to the future for additional and more


²Ibid., p. 144.
proficient parental involvement programs, there are things the learning disability teacher can do today. He/she must have an understanding of parental involvement in every facet of the program for learning disabled students.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Periodicals


APPENDIX
<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ATTENDANCE</th>
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</table>
Dear Parents,

A REMINDER: The planned parental involvement workshop is scheduled for Monday, ______, at ______, in Room 213. I look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely yours,

Carrie Roseberry
Teacher of Exceptional Children
Mirror on Meanings
The Boy Who Wasn't Stupid

Word Meaning Exercise

1. Today let's do something

2. That man always spoke

3. The car is in very poor

   It is almost

4. We

   reading almost every day.

5. My worst

   was a mis-spelled word.

Exercise score: 6
Word Meaning Test

1. Everyone gave a (different, difference) answer.

2. We saw someone going to a (forty, formal) party.

3. How is his (condition, condiment) since his accident?

4. We saw the (rules, ruins) of ancient Greece.

5. He will (stare, study) history in school.

6. Don't (slip, slap) on the ice.
VITA

Carrie Roseberry

Education:

Experience:
1965 - 1968 - Secretary, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Atlanta, Georgia.
1968 - 1971 - Typing Teacher, Atlanta School of Business.
1971 - present - Teacher, Atlanta Public School System.

Fields of Concentration:
Undergraduate, Elementary Education Graduate, Learning Disabilities.

Personal Information:
Member of Saint Paul Catholic Church, Alpha Pi Chi Sorority, Inc., N. E. A., G. A. E., A. A. E., Special interests, swimming, bowling, singing, speech, and ceramics.