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LINKING PARENTS COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

by
Migdalia Soto

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May, 2001

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 11, 2001

Abstract

Soto, Migdalia

Linking Parents, Community and School

May, 2001

University Mentor: Dr. Kathleen Sernak

Master of Arts in Educational Administration

The purpose of this study was to develop ways to build and create partnerships between parents, community and School by providing a variety of opportunities for parent-community participation. These partnerships will be foster through the use of effective communication methods, such as coffee club sessions, focus group discussions, and school newsletter.

This action research was conducted via qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze data. The participants for the study were the parents of the children at Parkside school, community members, and the faculty. A pre-and post-survey were sent to a randomly selected group of parents of students in first, third and fifth grades. The teachers and staff were also surveyed to measure their attitudes towards parent-community involvement. The surveys were tabulated and then calculated in percentages.

The results of the study indicate that parent-community involvement is possible when parents, community and the school family worked together as partners. As intended by this study, partnerships were established between parent-community and school as a result of identifying and providing meaningful, informative and enjoyable opportunities for participation in school activities, and in the school decision-making process. In addition, the school to home communication also increased due to the spectrum communication methods used.

Mini Abstract

Soto, Migdalia

Linking Parents, Community and School
May, 2001
University Mentor: Dr. Kathleen Sernak
Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this study was to develop ways to build partnerships between parents, community and School by providing opportunities for participation, and using a variety of communication methods.

The study indicated that partnerships were established among parent-community and school when meaningful, informative and enjoyable opportunities for collaboration were created.

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First I thank God for making all things possible for me. I would like to thank my husband Julio for his loving support and understanding. Thank you for all you did to comfort me physically and emotionally during this arduous time.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Focus of the Study:

The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" is based on the belief that a collaborative effort is necessary to provide all services and support that children need to thrive and develop well in this complex society.

One of the critical problems facing schools across the nation is the lack of meaningful and significant parental, and community involvement. Evidence shows a strong connection between parent and family involvement in schools and children's academic achievement, attendance, attitudes, and continued education (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Wanat, 1997). Recognizing the importance of parental and community involvement, the state department of education mandated the establishment of school management teams in each of the schools in New Jersey. One of the main goals of the School Management Team is to build parental and community ownership, collaboration, participation and support.

In the past, there have been barriers that have prevented parental involvement. Parents sometimes avoid school because they feel inadequate, unwelcome, threatened or insecure. In many cases, this is due to their own past educational experiences and their children's present difficulties. It should be recognized that parents, family and the community are the most important influence on children. Therefore, the school must create a positive climate by reaching out to families and communities and providing structures for them to become involved in the decision-making process of the school.

A high performing school requires meaningful parental involvement which empowers and allows parents to share in the decision making processes. It also requires broad-base community support. This support will come from communities that are well informed and well-engaged in the educational process of the school. This will be achieved through the use of effective school communication methods, and networking with parents and the community at large.

The intern will develop effective methods and procedures of communication to foster a rich partnership among parents, school and community.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study was to develop ways to build and create partnerships between parents, community and the Parkside School beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. It is the hope of this intern that as a result of this study parental and community involvement at Parkside School will significantly increase. Furthermore, it is also expected that greater opportunities for parents to be more involved in the decision-making processes of their children's education will be evident.

The intern will produce clear, concise, and properly structured written communication, styled to fit the audience, and communicate with individuals and groups in a positive manner. In addition, the intern wants to appropriately involve the community in assessing progress toward achieving school goals. Furthermore, the intern will apply human relations skills in interacting effectively with others.

The intern intends to establish a system, at Parkside School that will aid in generating the creation of a partnership between parents, school, and the community through the use of effective communication methods.

The intern will develop effective methods and procedures of communication to foster a rich partnership among parents, school and the community.

Definitions:

The following terms are critical to the understanding of the study.

COMER School Development Program - is a nationally recognized program that focuses on children's academic, emotional, social, and psychological needs.

Community Involvement - participation of community members, organizations and agencies in the children's education as well as school activities. Such participation includes: addressing family concerns by providing childcare, after school programs, and tutoring; by assisting with homework, parenting education, and social activities; and by participating in the school management team, school planning team, PTA, and so on. Furthermore, community agencies can assist the families with health and social services, such as medical care, counseling and home-based services.

Governance - any activity which provides parents the opportunity to participate in decision-making about school programs. This may include being a member of the school management team, the parent team, an active member of the PTA, and others. Some of the areas in which parents may help to make program decisions include the development and implementation of program activities, assessment, personnel decisions, funding allocations and budget decisions.

Parents - refers to the adult person who is the primary caregiver of the family.

Parental Involvement - refers to the various forms of parent participation. Such participation includes the following: parent- teacher conference, social activities, school management team, school planning team, PTO, volunteer work, chaperoning, tutoring, parenting education and other activities.

Whole School Reform Models - the educational models recommended by the Commissioner of Education and the Supreme Court justices in the Abbott V Burke decision. The models include Success for All, Ventures, Little Red School House, ALEM, and COMER School Development Program.

Whole School Reform (WSR) - is a restructuring of an entire school, putting in place a series of programs and strategies that have proven by research to be effective for improving student achievement, increasing parental and community involvement and creating an appropriate learning environment. This restructuring requires the support and participation of those who must carry it out and are affected by it. Therefore, the decision to implement WSR and select a model for implementation must be made by the principal and faculty of the school. This reform program systematically addresses curriculum standards, assessment, teacher professional development, governance, and family and student support, and integrates them with a common set of policies and priorities aimed at improved student achievement at the local school level.

Limitations of the Study:

The intern wants to develop ways to build and create partnerships between the parents, the community and the Parkside School beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. This study is targeted to one school site that has a specific population and unique needs. Therefore, the results of the study may not be applicable to other schools or districts. In addition, the amount of parental support and the amount of partnerships established between parents, community and the school may place limitations on the study. The resistance of teachers to accept increased parental involvement in the decision making process and the historical perceptions regarding the school's receptiveness, may also

present limitations. Furthermore, the length of time for this study does not provide an opportunity to measure the full outcome or impact of the project.

Setting of the Study:

Historical Overview: This section will provide the reader with the necessary basic information regarding the site where the intern completed her work. This data focused on the community and educational settings with an emphasis on the socio-economic status, economic factors and the government structure of Camden City, New Jersey, the School District and the Parkside Elementary School.

Camden, New Jersey, a historic city, is located in the northwestern part of the county of Camden along the Delaware River. It is the seventh largest city in the state and the largest city in Camden County. The city serves as the county seat and is the home to the federal and county courthouses. It measures over ten square miles and has a population of over one hundred thousand.

Camden was incorporated as a city in 1829. This city known for its shipyards and industry was once the home to the Radio Corporation of America, producer of the first picture tubes for television sets. Other factories produced chemicals, electrical appliances, leather and automobile accessories. A steel pen company, the first of its kind in the country, was established in Camden in 1860; the Campbell Soup Company plant was opened there in 1869 and started marketing condensed soups in 1897. The city is still the world headquarters for Campbell Soups (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1999-2000).

The Camden's waterfront has undergone a dramatic revitalization in the past decades. The twenty-five thousand capacity Blockbuster-SONY Entertainment Centre opened in June, 1995. This state of the art amphitheater offers year-round musical and dramatic entertainment. The center sits adjacent to the New Jersey Aquarium.

The waterfront is also home to Wiggins Park Marina and the Dr. Ulysses S. Wiggins Memorial Park. Plans are in progress to not only expand the waterfront park, but to link it with Philadelphia's Penn's Landing via an aerial tramway. There is also a river bus that runs between Penn's Landing and Camden's waterfront.

Camden was also the home to the great American poet Walt Whitman, who often wrote about the city and the surrounding. His legacy lives on in the Walt Whitman Poetry Center. The center sponsors regular exhibits and other cultural events throughout the year. Camden is also a major educational center in Southern New Jersey. In the northern part of the city, lies the Camden Campus of Rutgers The State University, and is also home to branches of Rowan University and the Camden County College.

The city has three hospitals: Cooper Hospital/University Medical Center, Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center and West Jersey Health System. Downtown Camden is a hub for public transportation. The PATCO High Speed Line has two stops in Camden prior to heading over the Delaware into Philadelphia. The Walter Rand transportation center has bus connections that take commuters to all parts of Southern New Jersey and Center City Philadelphia (Camden, NJ Official Website, 1999-2000). The new ultra-modern headquarters for the Delaware River Port Authority sits near Camden's burgeoning waterfront.

Socio-Economic Status: In decades after World War II, Camden, like many American urban areas, has traditionally been plagued by numerous problems associated with urban blight. Camden's economy declined as industries closed down or left the city; and middle class residents moved to the suburbs. By the early 1900's the employment rate was more than twice the state's average, and approximately half of Camden's inhabitants lived below the poverty line.

Camden's demographics include relatively diverse populations, but is heavily skewed towards minorities. The 1990 Census reported that there are approximately 87,492 residents in the city. This represents a three percent (3%) increase from the 1980 Census report of 84,910 residents. The city's racial composition is as follows: African-Americans 54%, Hispanics 24%, Whites 20%, Asians and Pacific Islanders 1%, and Native Americans less than 1%. Whites represent the only decreasing population; all other populations are increasing with the Asian Pacific Islanders population growing the fastest at a remarkable rate of 300%. The city's population as a whole has seen a 3% increase since the 1980 census.

Camden is also described as a city of children, and has proportionately 12.3 percent more children than the State of New Jersey and 9.1% more than Camden County. More than 17% of the children are living below the national poverty level. Many live with single-mother heads of households who need help in coping with overwhelming problems.

Camden City's age demographic differs considerably from that of Camden County as a whole. The city's population is skewed heavily to the lower end of the age scale. In Camden City, the median age is 26.3 as compared to 32.8 years for the county. In Camden County the largest age group, (25-44) comprised 32.9% of the population. In Camden City, the same group is the largest but comprises 29.3% of the population. In Camden County, 36.5% of the population is under 25; in Camden City 47.6% of the population is under the age of 25 (Camden, NJ Official Website, 1999-2000). Camden City's school-age group is its second largest population segment: 35.5% of the city's population is aged 5 to 17 as compared to 21.2% in Camden County for the same group.

This shift in population to the young end of the scale, when combined with Camden City's shrinking tax base for public education, job losses, high levels of unemployment and a poverty rate in excess of 36%, does not bode well for the chances of a skilled work force emerging in the city without heavy outside help and influence.

Historically, crime has soared in Camden in direct proportion to the loss of its economic base. Camden City represents only 17% of Camden County's population, however, 88% of all murders in the county occur there. The Camden City police estimate conservatively that 65% to 70% of all crime is drug related.

Drug activity is reported as the major fuel for high crime rates in the City of Camden. The net impact is a pattern of crime, drugs and violence that counters attempts to stabilize neighborhoods, attract businesses vital to Camden's tax base, and educate the city's children. Camden City Police Department statistics from 1989 to the present confirm this pattern.

Crime increased by 23% between 1989 and 1990. Thereafter, violent crime leveled off with a down turn from 1990 to 1992. Nevertheless, overall city crime statistics are described as daunting, especially given the total population of the City of Camden. Serious crime increased from 12,566 in 1989 to 13,387 in 1992, an increase of 6.5%. In 1992 alone, 1,484 (1.77% of the total population) individuals were arrested for drug violations. In 1994 the City of Camden, as well as the entire state of New Jersey, was horrified as Camden compiled a record of 50 homicides in one year (South Jersey Community Guide, 2000).

During the late 1990's Camden City is still trying to place itself on the map. Drugs are still the major cause for the rise in crime rate which keeps many potential residents and businesses from locating in Camden. Unemployment, crime and struggling

industries are the major future problems restricting Camden's growth. Despite Camden's socio-economic status, the city's strategic location offers hope that this trend may be reversed.

Economic Factors: Camden has experienced thirty years of erosion of its economic base characterized by industrial and ensuing middle-income flight from the city. However, since the early-to-mid 1980s, Camden has begun to show signs of economic recovery.

Although the city's economic growth has not been overwhelmingly large, it has been characterized by a great deal of change within the major economic sectors. Of New Jersey's seven largest cities, only three, one of which is Camden, has experienced gains in employment. Moreover, the city's per capita income has also experienced a significant rise, although Camden still lags behind the nation, state and county in that regard.

The type of employment within the city has changed dramatically over the years. Camden's economy has steadily lost manufacturing jobs while gaining jobs in the health care industry. In order to stem the flow of vital manufacturing jobs leaving Camden, the city needs strategy to strengthen the manufacturing sector (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1995).

According to the 1992 New Jersey Employment and Training Commission study, the following linkages needed to be established: a community service strategy, a youth apprenticeship program, school to work initiatives (including technical preparations options), literacy programs using public and nonprofit agencies and workplace education programs using financial resources from the New Jersey Work Force Development Partnership Program to improve resident skills.

Government Structure: Camden operates under a Mayor-Council form of government. Originally, under this form of government, the City Council consisted of seven Council members elected at-large.

In 1994, the City opted to modify the form of government to better address the changing needs of the citizenry. As a result, the City of Camden was divided into four (4) councilmanic districts. Instead of electing the entire council at-large, only one council member is elected from each of the four districts each election. In 1995, the election was changed from a partisan election to a non-partisan municipal election. The Municipal Election is held on the second Tuesday of May (Camden NJ Official Website, 1999-2000).

School District: The Camden City School District has a total of thirty-four (34) schools: eighteen (18) elementary PreK to grade 5, five (5) Family schools PreK to grade 8, four Middle Schools 6th to grade 8, four High schools 9th to 12th grade, three Alternative Schools, and one Adult Education school which also houses the special program for pregnant girls. Presently, the District's Board of Education, with the School Facilities committee, are studying possible changes to the schools' grade level configuration for the 2002-2003 school year. The Camden School District's student enrollment for the 1999-2000 school year was approximately 18,536 students PreK to 12th grade. More than 75% of the school-aged children enrolled in the city schools are identified as at-risk or disadvantaged. Table 1 summarizes the ethnic and gender composition of the district's student population (Reiss 1999-2000).

Table 1 Ethnic and Gender composition of the district student population

(Reiss, 1999-2000).

Ethnic	Males	Females
African Americans	5,041	5,480
Latinos	3,661	3,518
White	164	157
Asians	180	173
Others	3	16

Camden City Schools is the largest single employer in the city. The district has a total of 3,999 employees (Reiss, 2000).

The Camden School District, is one of twenty-eight (28) school districts in New Jersey identified as special needs or Abbott district as decided by the New Jersey Supreme Court. This decision was rendered to ensure that the public school children from the poorest districts would receive the educational entitlements guaranteed them by the Constitution and in order to meet all the requirements of a thorough and efficient education. As a result of this Supreme Court decision, schools in the Abbott districts are required to undergo a reform process referred to as Whole School Reform. As part of this process, and in accordance with the regulations, each school in Camden School District had the opportunity to research the various models recommended by the State Department of Education and the Supreme Court with the goal of adopting the model that best addresses their schools educational needs. The various Whole School Reform models adopted by the Camden City Schools were Success for All, Ventures, Little Red School House, ALEM, and COMER School Development Program.

The Camden School District s operating budget for the 1999-2000 school year was approximately \$236 million dollars. Ninety (90%) of this budget is from State Aid,

five (5%) comes from city tax, three (3%) represent federal aid and two (2%) constituted free surplus from the previous year (Freeman, 1999-2000).

The intern site is Parkside Elementary School in Camden, New Jersey located on Wildwood and Kenwood Avenues. The school was built in 1907. The Parkside section where the school is located is a diverse community of single, two parent, grandparents, and extended family homes. Many of the families work and others are assisted by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

The school enrollment is approximately 329 students. The grade levels range from Kindergarten to grade five. The ethnic composition of the school is comprise of 290 African-American, 37 Latinos, and 2 Whites (Reiss, 1999-2000). The past three years has shown a steady increase in the Latino population in the Parkside school community. About 95 percent of the students are considered to be at risk for failure.

Student mobility, although it has decreased in the past two years, is still a major concern and a persistent problem of the school and the district as a whole. Student attendance rate at Parkside School has been constantly stable and above state levels for the past four years. This is primarily due to the various incentive programs offered to the students.

The school has a total of sixty three (63) staff members. The professional staff consist of one principal, twenty five teachers, a teacher facilitator, a guidance counselor, one nurse, one part-time art teacher, a music teacher, a physical education teacher, a Spanish teacher, one computer teacher and one technology coordinator. The non-professional staff includes the secretaries, instructional assistants, a school community coordinator, two security officers, custodians, and the cafeteria staff.

The Whole School Reform model adopted by Parkside School is the Comer model.

It is also known as the School Development Program (SDP). The School Development Program is a nationally recognized program that focuses on children's academic, emotional, social, and psychological needs (Comer, 1989). This model was selected because it addresses the needs of all the students and provides intensive professional development training for all school staff and parents. It is an implementation friendly model. The Comer School Development Program encompasses a parental component which is essential for the successful development of the total child. Another component of the SDP is the School Planning and Management Team. The purpose of the School Management Team is to ensure participation of staff, parents and the community in school-level decision making and to develop a culture of cooperation, accountability and commitment (Comer, 1996). The lack of parental and community involvement in the School Management Team, has had impact on the school decision-making process. At the present time, a total of 5 parents have been involved with the school in various capacities. However, only one parent has consistently attended the School Management Team's meetings.

Parkside School, an old three story brick building with colorful instructional bulletin boards, provides students with a nurturing environment that develops their intellectual potential and motivates them to high levels of thinking. This school, which has an atmosphere of cooperation and camaraderie, encourages students' feelings of self-worth. The school's primary goal is to enable students to see themselves as a community of learners.

Significance of the study:

Research has shown that in schools that have strong parental and community involvement, students perform better than in those schools with less significant parental

and community involvement. Parents and teachers who work in collaborative ways, to provide children the desire to learn and work hard, appear to be more successful in achieving their goals. Effective communication between parents and teachers is essential if children are to become successful learners and productive citizens. When parents are involved in school, children tend to be more on-task in the school, and parents and the school develop a true camaraderie (Emmons, 1994).

The successful implementation of this study will result in a significant increase of parental involvement, and create a partnership among parents, school and community.

Organization of the Study:

The remaining chapters of this study will include the following areas:

- review of the literature,
- design of the study,
- presentation of the research findings
- conclusions, implications, and further study.

Chapter II will contain the review of the literature. The review of the literature will provide the reader information about the research context of the study and support the rationale for the relevance of the study. Chapter III is the design of the study. This chapter provides a general description of the research design, and the development and design of the research instruments used in the study. It also includes a description of the data collection methods and the data analysis plan used in the study. Chapter IV presents and analyzes the data collected and summarizes the research findings. Chapter V describes the study's major conclusions and the corresponding implications of the intern's leadership development. Furthermore, it describes any impact that the study may have had on the organization and summarizes recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

In light of the 1995 Goals 2000: Educate America Act, a much greater commitment exists today to increase parental and community involvement in education. Restructuring school and teacher practices to encourage parental and community involvement has become imperative. The business of educating children is not something that can be accomplished by teachers and administrators alone. It is everybody's business. The increase in the numbers of children living in conditions that predispose them to be at risk such as poverty, drugs, divorce, and violence, all of which are factors that impact student achievement, reinforces the fact that school-community ties need to be strengthened.

The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent and community involvement in children's learning are key factors in the success of children's development and achievement in school and in life. In addition, current research and literature provide key information that will aid schools in their plans to improve parental and community participation. Factors identified in the literature and research to which schools should give serious consideration are: (1) factors influencing parental participation; (2) a broader definition of parental involvement and (3) types of parental involvement (Comer, 1982; Bauch, 1994).

When parents are involved in a child's education, both the child and parents are likely to benefit. Research has shown that parent participation in a child's education frequently helps parents develop positive attitudes towards schools and a better

understanding of the school system (Comer, 1989; Cotton & Reed, 1989). The research also indicates that parent participation enhances a child's self-esteem and improves parent-child relationships (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, and Ben-Avie, 1996). However, despite these benefits, many schools and families often experience difficulties in establishing effective home school partnerships. Barriers to develop effective home-school partnerships are not insignificant or trivial. The amount of parental and community involvement in a school varies from school to school, and from community to community.

Studies conducted during the past 30 years have consistently shown a reduction in the number of contacts between school and low-income and minority parents (Moles, 1993). As a result, educators assume that a parent's absence from the school environment means that they are not interested in their children's education. However, there are other explanations.

Many factors affect parent involvement in schools. A review of the literature demonstrates several common factors prevalent in all the information reviewed. The parents' previous negative school experiences of fear, anxiety, and/or intimidation, either as children or as parents, become barriers preventing them from feeling connected to the school. Grant and Gomez (1996) find that whether parents from diverse cultures are able to interact comfortably with schools depends on their past educational background and experiences. Another barrier is the need for parents to focus on basic survival needs. Benson (1982-1986) observe that a large number of lower economic minority parents are young single females, in their teens and early 20s, who feel overwhelmed by the demands on their time. Many of these young mothers attend school or job training and must use public transportation, which takes considerable time. They often have health problems in

their families due to the lack of medical care and bad nutrition. The demands of the workplace and other barriers such as the new welfare to work regulations, mental health problems such as depression and disabilities place many restrictions on the time and energy that a parent can make available for their children and schools.

Another factor that influences parent involvement in urban school is the high-crime areas where they live, which causes additional emotional and financial problems (Benson, 1982-1986). Although, the literature review identified many barriers to parent participation, the greater barriers to effective parent involvement is the lack of planning and the lack of mutual understanding. School staff wishing to institute effective parent involvement programs will need to be both openminded and well organized in their approach to engaging parent participation (Yap, & Enoki, 1994). As part of the planning process, teachers and administrators need to assess their own readiness for involving parents and determine how they will engage and utilize them. For schools to overcome common barriers to effective home-school partnerships, administrators and teachers must take these factors into consideration.

The book *Family Involvement in Children s Education: Successful Local Approaches* (1997) describes successful approaches to family involvement in education. These approaches are organized around strategies for overcoming common barriers to family involvement, which includes overcoming time and resource constraints; providing information and training to parents and school staff; restructuring schools to support family involvement; bridging school-family differences; language barriers, inappropriate attitudes and tapping external supports for partnerships. The book also provides resources for building successful partnerships between the school, parents and community.

Although getting parents involved in their children's schools is a challenge for educators, research shows that educators can do a great deal to promote successful parent involvement. The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (Johnson, 1996) indicates that parents who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than do other parents. Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that many parents respond to encouragement from educators. In their national study of 2,317 inner-city elementary and middle school students, the best predictors of parent involvement was what the school did to promote it. School attitude and actions were more important than the parents' income, educational level, race, or previous school-volunteering experience in predicting whether the parent would be involved in the school. Davies (1991) suggests three ways that the school can promote parent involvement: establishment of a parent center, a home visitor program, and action research teams. Dan Jesse (1997), in the article *Increasing Parental Involvement*, discusses the importance of effective communication between parents and teachers as a strong element of effective parental involvement. Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children's education than parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication. Recognizing parent efforts, making parents feel welcome in the building, communicating effectively with parents, and conducting special events such as holding a parent acquainted coffee and breakfast in the fall, family night, grandparents day, fathers and son dinner are useful strategies for increasing parent involvement.

School attitudes and actions toward parent involvement are largely influenced by teachers and administrators. Don Davies, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and

former president of the Institute for Responsive Education, states,

In any school...leadership is essential if a school staff is to choose the partnership approach to school reform.....In most cases, the leadership to reach out to the community will have to come from the principal (Davies, 1991, p.382).

The school administrator will need to emphasize to parents that they are partners of the school and that their involvement is needed and valued.

If parents and families are to be involved as true partners in their children s education, it is important to provide ongoing opportunities to hear their concerns and comments as well as providing them with clear information (Moles, 1993). Frequent and positive school-to-home communication strategies can include, phone calls, home visits, personal notes, newsletters, progress reports, conferences, and the establishment and use of the parent center. These strategies help parents feel more self-confident, more comfortable with the school, and more likely to become involved.

Although parents are reluctant or unable to participate many parents willingly volunteer their time in the schools. Consistent parental involvement can be achieved and maintained through the planning of regular scheduled activities and programs that are stimulating, informative, and enjoyable. Articles reviewed noted that the quality and type of parent involvement has a greater impact in the amount of parent participation in schools.

Professional development and training in parent involvement play an important role in helping educators connect with parents. This teacher and staff training program can include basic components such as understanding family backgrounds and lifestyles, employing strategies for effective collaboration with parents, and using techniques to

improve two-way communication between home and school. In addition, it is helpful for teacher training programs to contain information on strategies to involve parents in helping their children learning in school and at home. The administrator responsibility is to facilitate the training by providing the time, materials and resources. In addition the administrator is also responsible for making sure that the parent s input is welcome and acknowledged. The research reviewed by Henderson and Berla (1994) identifies qualities of effective school efforts to involve parents as well as specific actions that parents can take to help their children succeed in school. Research conducted by Swick (1992) provides insight on teacher attributes and parent attributes that lead to successful teacher-parent partnerships. Teachers and parents worked together most effectively when both exhibit warmth, sensitivity, and feeling of competence. In studies reported by Comer and Hayes (1991), positive benefits for students in Benton Harbor, Michigan, Prince George s County, Maryland, and New Haven, Connecticut, were associated with schools that follow three guiding principals for involving parents in schools. These three guiding principals are collaboration, consensus, and no fault. In those schools gains were noted in the academic performance of students as well as in their behavior and self-concept.

The literature reveals that schools that are most successful in engaging parents and families in support of their children s learning look beyond traditional definitions of parent involvement to a broader concept. School/parent/community involvement included supporting families in activities outside of the school that encouraged their children s learning. These schools provided parents and families a variety of ways for participation. Parents are given the opportunities to choose from a range of activities which accommodate different schedules, preferences, and capabilities. Recognizing that parents differ greatly in their willingness, ability, and available time for involvement in school

activities, these schools provide a continuum of options for parent participation.

The research has shown that a systematic, ongoing and comprehensive involvement of parents in the education of their children has positive outcome for children. Likewise, that same process can enhance the process per se and increase the possibility of establishing a strong home-school partnership (Comer, 1991; Carter, 1993).

Dr. Joyce Epstein (1995) identified and categorized six types of parent involvement in her research. They were found to be the most effective in helping schools structure family and community involvement programs.

Type 1- Parenting : Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

Type 2- Communicating: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

Type 3- Volunteering: Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

Type 4- Learning at home: Involve families with their children learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.

Type 5 - Decision making: Include families as participants in the school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

Type 6- Collaborating with the community: Coordinating resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups.

Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership and has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families. In addition, each type requires redefinition's of some basic principles of involvement. In order to develop an effective school partnership all six types of parent involvement should be included. According to Comer (1991), the three basic levels of school and community participation should also be reflected. He describes these levels as follows:

Level 1 - Broad participation and general support. This level of participation is directly related to student achievement. This level includes parents who attend traditional school events such as: open houses, parent teacher conference, student fairs and performances. It also includes parents who support school policies, communicate with school frequently, make sure students come to school on time and support students learning at home.

Level 11 - Active daily participation in schools. This level of participation is directly related to improving school climate. This level includes parents and community members involved in volunteer activities such as student supervision, fund raising, field trips, tutoring, school materials, community outreach, parent center activities, and others.

Level 111 - Participation in school management. This level of participation is directly related to improved school effectiveness. It includes parent and community members willing to advocate for children,

take leadership roles and help make decisions affecting how the school is operated. It includes volunteers that participate in governance teams, committees, and any other decision making body at the school.

A high performing school also requires broadbased community support. This support will come from communities that are well informed and engaged in the education process that go on in the neighborhood school. Communication between parents, members of the community, business, health care and social agencies, teachers and students is essential to gain and maintain support for the learning community (Epstein, 1995). Good communication is the foundation of all school-parent-community involvement. The school principal is responsible for the development and implementation of a process that will ensure that effective two-way communication occurs on a regular basis between school and home and between school and community. The development of this level of communication does not take place overnight, and it is a very challenging task. The school principal needs to use available means, such as personal contact and written communication to interact effectively with the members of the community. Establishing collaborative efforts with the community will lead to the development of partnerships with community organizations, and agencies. These partnerships promote the sharing of information and resources that are helpful to students, families the school and community in general. Community groups, cultural organizations, volunteer organizations, businesses, senior groups, and religious organizations can provide cultural, recreational, and extra-curricular opportunities so that children lives are enriched.

Broad-based community involvement contributes to the awareness of the school needs and resources in order for the stakeholders to offer their support for the activities,

programs and learning taking place in the school. Community partnership help schools address family concerns by providing childcare, after school programs, tutoring, assist with homework and parenting education programs. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with community agencies can assist the families with health and social services, such as medical care and counseling.

By establishing a collaborative approach between parent-school- community, schools can and will be successful in improving the educational achievement of all students. These collaborative partnerships create greater benefits than each group working individually. Frequent interactions between school, families, and communities seem to work effectively. According to Epstein (1995), more students are more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school (p.702). As a result, school-family community partnerships enable students and families to produce their own success.

The literature reviewed has indicated that when schools view their relationship with parents as a partnership in which school and home share equal responsibility for children s learning, the effort results in an increase in the levels and type of parent involvement. When this partnership is extended to include the community the benefits are greater.

Sharing the responsibility for children s learning with the school, home and community provides students with more opportunities for meaningful engaged learning. This allows students to make the connection between what is taught in school and the skills required in the real world.

A collaborative effort among all stakeholders is necessary to provide the services and support that children need to thrive and develop well in this complex society. Communities today face a variety of social problems which impact the school. In order for the school to help the children and parents to overcome these problems a broad-based community approach appears to be the best solution. In a school where everyone counts and every one cares all become givers and takers, and all succeed in developing a better future for the entire community.

Chapter 3

The Design of the study

The participants for the study were the parents of the children who attend Parkside Elementary School, the teachers and staff. The socio-economic profile of the parent participants included working parents, non-working parents, and parents receiving temporary aid to needy families (TANF). The ethnic categories representatives of the neighborhood include 88.1 % African American, 11.2 % Latinos and .9 % white. Two parent, single parent, grandparents, step parents and foster parents families comprised the population for the study.

Since, the intern did not wish to limit the number of participants or the degree of their involvement with the school, all parents were afforded the opportunity to participate in the various programs and activities provided for parent involvement. However, in order to make the data collection process more manageable, the respondents for the surveys were a randomly selected group of parents or the primary caregiver of the family. These sampling included twenty parents of students in grades one, twenty-one parents of students in grade three and eighteen parents of students in grade five. Each of these grade levels represent the class with the largest enrollment. In addition, all Parkside teachers and staff were surveyed to measure their attitudes towards parent-community involvement.

This action research was conducted via qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze data. Pre and post surveys sent to parents, teachers, and community

members were used to collect data about their attitudes towards Parkside School (Appendix A). An increase in parent and community involvement was expected as a result of varied opportunities and activities for parent-community participation. Furthermore, an increase in the communication from school to home was also expected, as a result of the spectrum of communication forms used in the study.

The surveys (Appendix A) were designed with both closed-ended and open-ended items. Before distribution, two parents and two teachers were asked to complete the survey and offer suggestions for its improvement. After the field test, a few corrections were necessary and the survey was then ready for use. The purpose of the parent survey was explained in a cover letter. To ensure maximum return of the surveys, an ice cream party was promised for the class or classes whose return was 100%.

To analyze patterns in parent-community participation and interactions, the following entities were examined: agendas, sign in sheets, and lists of volunteers. The intern looked at the number of parents and community members that participated in the different types of activities and programs. In addition, we also identified which types of parent-community involvement were most successful as determined by the number of participants in each activity. In an effort to determine increase in parent-community participation and interactions, the total number of involved parents was compared to the previous year participation. Furthermore, photographs, observations of parents involvement in school activities and minutes from various meetings were reviewed and documented in a written report.

The information from the surveys was tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical procedures and then organized in a written report. The likert scale data was first translated into a quantified form by assigning values to responses. The respondents

were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 4 -point scale. The scores responses were assigned from one to four points, four for most favorable (strongly agree), one for least favorable (strongly disagree). The score for each respondent was tabulated by totaling the scores corresponding to his or her responses. The score of each participant was then calculated in percentages.

In addition, the results from the pre and post surveys were compared to identify and measure changes in the attitudes toward Parkside School.

The data collected assisted the intern in the formulation of her conclusion regarding the research question. All findings were shared with the school principal, the parent committee and the school management team.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

The intern's objective for the research project was to develop ways to build and create partnerships between parents, community and the Parkside School.

The research findings within this chapter were derived from qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative data consisted of an analysis of agendas, sign-in sheets, list of volunteers, observations of parent involvement in school activities, and field notes.

The intern observed the parents' interactions and participation in the various activities provided during this internship. It was observed that more parent-community interaction occurred in the activities that provided parents with hands-on training, and with strategies on how to help their children learn. This seems to indicate to the intern that when parents know the purpose for a meeting, they are more inclined to attend. However, when parents were unaware of the purpose of a meeting and the meeting fell under the general heading of Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting, the attendance was lower.

It was also observed that an increase in parent participation occurred after the first parent-teacher conference. A total of 100 parents attended the first parent-teacher conference, compared to 150 parents that attended the second conference. The sign-in sheets used for the meetings and to document the various activities, consistently showed an increase of parent-community participation in the school activities compared to

previous years. About fifteen parents volunteered to read in their children's class this year compared to six parents last year. Approximately ten (10) parents participated consistently, meeting for thirty minutes one day a week in the coffee club (Appendix B). The intern began the club for the purpose of increasing communication among parents, staff and community members. The parents sit down informally and dialogue about the school's mission, activities, programs and other topics of interest while drinking coffee. This coffee club project has afforded the principal the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with the parents. The parents appear more at ease to share their concerns and their vision with the principal.

In addition, a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) has been established in the school for the first time in many years (Appendix C). Furthermore, the number of parents that participated on the school management team and parent team has increased from previous years (Appendix C).

During and after the interactions, many parents expressed their views with regard to their involvement in the various activities and programs (Appendix D). Likewise, some teachers and staff members also expressed their opinions of their observations with regard to the increase of parent-community participation in the school this year (Appendix D).

The quantitative data consisted of an analysis of a pre and post survey to measure changes in the attitudes toward Parkside School (Appendix A). The intern sent home sixty (60) surveys with the students in grades one, three and four. Forty-five (45) or seventy-five 75% of the surveys were returned. The following data was generated from the returned surveys.

The pre-test reflects the attitudes of parent-community prior to the implementation of the parental involvement activities. The post-test reflects parent-community attitudes after the implementation of the parent involvement activities. A comparison of the results of the pre and post parent-community survey yielded the information which follows.

The items/questions in the survey that reflect the greatest change in attitudes towards the school were:

Questions #	pre	post
6. My child s teacher is receptive to his/her needs.	69	94
8. My input and suggestions are valued.	76	98
9. The communication from the school to home is appropriate.	60	94
10. My child s teacher communicates with me appropriately.	45	82
11. The Parkside Elementary School provides opportunities for parent participation in school activities.	62	84
12. I actively participate in school functions.	64	80
13. I attend parent-teacher conferences.	70	91
14. I rate Parkside Elementary Staff/Faculty as excellent.	58	78
17. I have participated in school activities this year.	42	64

The items/questions in the survey that reflected moderate changes in the attitudes towards the school were:

Questions #	pre	post
1. The staff at Parkside School is friendly.	76	91
4. My child s teacher welcomes me in the classroom.	79	98

2. The staff at Parkside School is caring.	76	91
5. The school is receptive to my child needs.	73	89
7. My child is getting the support he/she needs at Parkside School.	73	91

The items/questions in the survey that reflected the least changes in attitudes towards the school were:

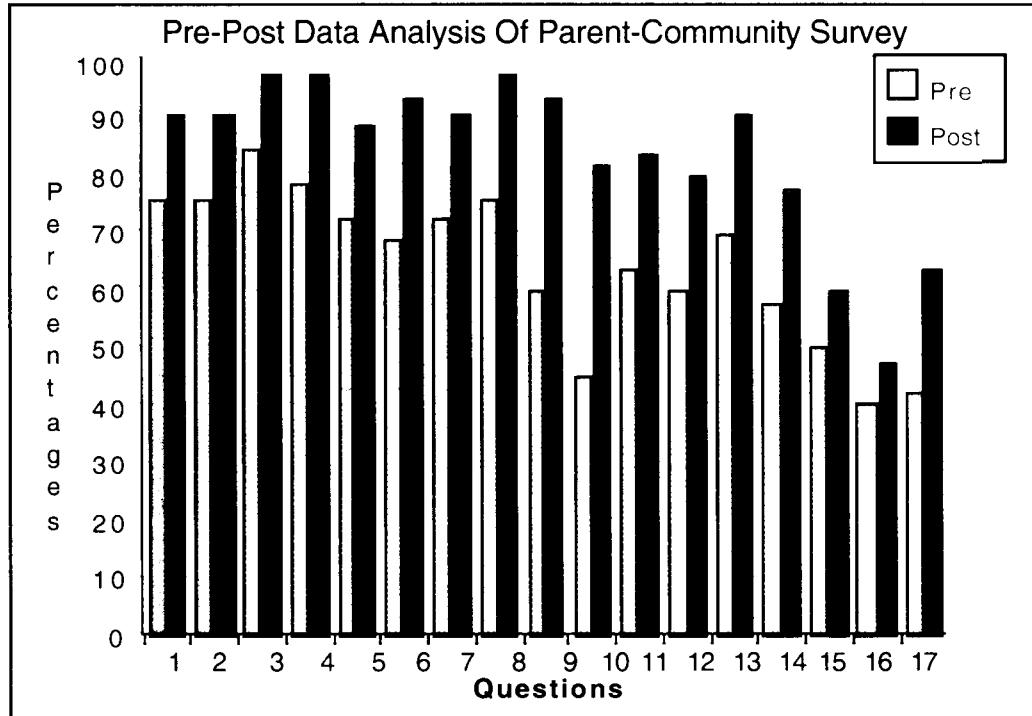
Questions#	pre	post
3. I feel welcome in the school.	85	98
15. I rate the administrative staff as excellent.	50	60
16. I believe my child would not receive a better education in another school in Camden.	40	47

The survey results indicated the following:

- providing parents with activities for involvement, improved parents attitudes towards Parkside School.
- by increasing school-to-home communication methods, parents felt more comfortable and receptive towards the school and staff.
- by receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers, parents felt better about the school, and therefore tended to get more involved.

In addition, the parents responses suggest that the process of building trust has begun at Parkside School, but that this trusts needs to be developed further.

Graph 1 Represents pre and post data analysis of the parent-community survey



In addition to the pre and post survey completed by the parents, a survey was given to the teachers and staff to examine their attitudes towards parent-community involvement (Appendix A). Of the thirty-eight surveys distributed to the teachers and staff, sixteen (16) were returned. The following represents the percentages of responses item by item:

	SA	A	D	SD	No Response
1. The staff at Parkside School is friendly.	13%	62%	19%	6%	-
2. The staff at Parkside is caring.	6%	75%	13%	6%	-
3. The parents of my students give me the support I need.	6%	56%	25%	-	13%
4. The school is receptive to my students needs.	13%	56%	13%	5%	13%
5. I am receptive to my students needs.	44%	56%	-	-	-

6. I welcome parents in my classroom.	69%	31%	-	-	-
7. I value my students parents input and suggestions.	63%	37%	-	-	-
8. The communication from the school to home is appropriate.	44%	56%	-	-	-
9. I communicate with parents appropriately.	13%	56%	13%	5%	13%
10. It is my responsibility to promote parent participation in school.	44%	44%	6%	-	6%
11. I provide opportunities for parents to participate in class activities.	13%	69%	13%	-	5%
12. The school provide opportunities for active parent participation.	19%	75%	-	-	6%
13. Teachers should communicate with parents when children are doing well in class.	50%	44%	-	-	6%
14. Teachers should communicate with parents only when their children are having problems in class.	-	-	38%	62%	-
15. I rate the Parkside Elementary Staff /Faculty as excellent.	6%	50%	38%	6%	-
16. I rate the administrative staff as excellent.	13%	62%	6%	-	19%

Open-ended question

17. Have you conducted classroom activities that provide opportunities for parent involvement?

38% Yes

44% No

The following information can be observed from the data:

1. Although 94% of the teachers/staff strongly agreed or agreed that the school provides opportunities for parent-community involvement, only 88% of the teachers/staff agreed that it is their responsibility to promote parent participation in school.
2. While 69% of the teachers/staff strongly agreed and 31% agreed they welcome parents in their classrooms, only 38% of the teachers/staff conducted or planned activities for parent involvement. Nineteen percent (19%) did not respond to the question.
3. One hundred percent (100%) of the teachers/staff indicated that the school to home communication is appropriate, while only 69% strongly agreed or agreed that they communicate with parents appropriately. Furthermore, 18% of the teachers/staff indicated that they do not communicate with parents appropriately.
4. Although 94% of the teachers/staff strongly agreed or agreed that teachers should communicate with parents when children are doing well, only 69% of the teachers agreed they communicate with parents appropriately.
5. One hundred percent of the teacher/staff strongly agreed or agreed that they are receptive to their students' needs, while 69% agreed the school is receptive to their students' needs.
6. While 81% of the teachers/staff feel that the Parkside faculty is caring, only 56% felt that the faculty is excellent.
7. When teachers/staff were asked the open-ended question: Have you conducted classroom activities that provide opportunities for parent involvement, 38% of the teachers/staff responded yes and 44% responded no.

The teacher survey results, reflected that teachers do not see themselves as having responsibility for promoting parental involvement. While teachers are receptive to

parents coming to school, they have not planned or provided opportunities for parent involvement. Effective communication needs to be nurtured by both teachers and parents. A strong element of effective parent involvement, is the communication between the teacher and the parent. The information reflected in this study, indicated that additional work has to be done with teachers to make parental involvement successful. Teachers need additional strategies and training in order to make parental involvement more viable. Training academies that address effective teacher and parent communication and involvement, would benefit teachers in promoting parent participation in the classroom as well as in the school.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data suggested that parents at Parkside School have developed a more receptive attitude toward the school. However, this data also indicated a need for additional teachers training in order for the school to take full advantage of the change in parental attitude.

The data collected will assist the intern in her formulation of how well the project accomplished its purpose of developing ways to build and create partnerships among parents, community and the school.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

This study targeted one elementary school site in Camden City. The parent and community involvement for this school has been very limited over the last five years. During the 1999-2000 school year, a total of five parents had on-going involvement with the school in various capacities. However, only one parent consistently participated in school activities. These numbers reflect similar participation in prior years.

The intern recognizes that in theory, it has been acknowledged that there is a critical link between parental involvement in school and children success. The actual practice is often a very different story.

Promoting parent and community involvement is a challenge for all educators. There needs to be a willingness, dedication and perseverance on the part of the school community to overcome this challenge. Designing programs for parent-community involvement requires nontraditional strategies and coordinated efforts from all the stakeholders. The school instructional leader cannot do it alone. Parent and community involvement is the responsibility of all persons involved in the business of educating children.

This study has shown that parental involvement is possible when parents, the school administration, and teachers work together as partners. As intended by this study, parent involvement was increased as a result of identifying and providing meaningful, informative and enjoyable activities. Organizing and implementing activities and

programs such as Back to School Night, School Planning Team meetings, Parent Team meetings, Parenting training, Computer training, Coffee Club, Grandparents Breakfast, Fathers Dinner, Volunteering, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and student performances resulted in increased of parent-community participation (Appendix B). In addition, a Parent Teacher Organization has been re-established after five years (Appendix C).

Furthermore, the communication between the school and home also increased, due to the variety of communication methods used during the study. The methods of communication consisted of, informational newsletter, flyers, routine students progress reports, telephone calls, a monthly calendar of school activities, and a school newspaper that focuses on student-contributed articles.

As parents became involved in the various activities and programs offered throughout the study, an increase in parental support for the school fundraising activities, chaperoning, and special programs was evident. In addition, for the first time, parents took the initiative to organize a school activity by recommending and planning an end-of-the-school-year Fifth Grade Dance. Parents and community members were more willing to help the school principal advocate for the school s needs.

This intern, was overjoyed to observe presence of parents in the building, especially during the lunch period. Parent volunte ers helped with lunch discipline and the students were extremely respectful. In addition, by February teachers began making positive comments about the increase of parent participation (Appendix D).

Implications

The research findings suggest that in order to develop future activities and programs to increase parental-community involvement, the following needs to occur:

- An effort should be made to recruit and to involve a wide variety of parents and

community members. This can be achieved by planning and providing opportunities for parent involvement beyond the school day.

- Hold staff workshops on communications skills with a special focus on parents.
- Teachers need to plan activities in their lessons to provide for parent and community involvement and participation.
- Teachers need to improve and implement strategies in order to communicate effectively with parents. Communication should be ongoing and on a weekly basis, if possible.
- Seek input from parents about the kind of information they would like to receive from the school. Many parents in this study wanted to learn more about technology, the curriculum, and specific learning activities they could use at home to help their children.
- Provide more academic events at the school where students and parents become active participants in the learning process. Events such as; Math Night, Story Telling Hour, computer training for children and parents, a multicultural day/ or night and others.
- Clear and open communication with parents is essential in the development of trust between the school and the parents. When parents are knowledgeable about what is happening in their child's school and classroom they feel value as partners and connected to the school.
- Provide seminars and training for parents such as; Helping Your Child Learn , How to help with Homework , Living with a Pre-Teen , Self-Esteem and Encouragement of your child , GED Classes , ESL Classes and others.

- Draw upon the expertise and interests of parents. Ask parents to give talks and demonstrations at the school.
- Recognize parents efforts
- Make parents feel welcome and comfortable in school
- Continue to emphasize that parents are partners of the school and that their involvement is needed and valued.

This study was very gratifying and it provided the intern with the opportunity to develop and practice several leadership competencies. The intern was able to produce clear, concise, and properly structured written communication and was able to communicate with individuals and groups in a positive manner. In addition, the intern involved the community in assessing progress toward achieving the school s goals. Furthermore, the intern applied human relations skills in interacting effectively with the parents, community members and others.

As a result of this study, several organizational changes took placed:

- The number of parent involvement activities and programs increased.
- Parents were visible for the school s daily activities.
- The number of volunteer parent and community members increased.
- The number of parent members on the School Planning Team increased from one to four.
- The types of communication from school to home increased.
- Parents began to feel more positive about the school.

Further Study

This study focused on strategies and techniques to increase parent-community involvement. However, the aspect of teacher receptiveness to increase parental involvement needs to be examined and study further.

It is also recommended that the Parkside faculty and staff should be trained on Dr. James Comer's three principals of parental involvement.

Finally, further discussions are needed to encourage the interagency collaborations between school personnel, community agency personnel, parents, and community members. By implementing collaborative initiatives, schools, agencies and communities can work together to improve outcomes for the children and families they serve.

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Appendix A
Research Instruments

Parkside Elementary School
1227 Kenwood Ave.
Camden, NJ 08103-2815
(856) 966-8977

Dolores Sanchez
Principal

Migdalia Soto
Supervisor

December 13, 2000

Dear Parents:

At Parkside School we are very interested in addressing any concerns you may have about your child's education. To accomplish this task, you have been selected to participate in this process by completing the enclosed survey. The survey should take no more than five minutes of your time.

Your willing participation in answering this survey will be greatly appreciated. Personal identification is not required. All responses are strictly confidential. The results will be reported only as group data.

Please return the survey to your child's teacher in the enclosed self-address envelope by Friday, December 15, 2000.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Your opinion is highly valued.

Sincerely,

Migdalia Soto
Supervisor

Parent Survey

Please answer the following questions as directly and honestly as possible. Circle your response.

Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	
The staff at Parkside School is friendly.	SA	A	D	SD
The staff at Parkside is caring.	SA	A	D	SD
I feel welcome in the school.	SA	A	D	SD
My child's teacher welcomes me in the classroom.	SA	A	D	SD
The school is receptive to my child's needs.	SA	A	D	SD
My child's teacher is receptive to his/ her needs.	SA	A	D	SD
My child is getting the support he/she needs at Parkside School.	SA	A	D	SD
My input and suggestions are valued.	SA	A	D	SD
The communication from the school to home is appropriate.	SA	A	D	SD
My child's teacher communicates with me appropriately.	SA	A	D	SD
The Parkside School provide opportunities for parent participation in school activities.	SA	A	D	SD
I actively participate in school functions.	SA	A	D	SD
I attend Parent teacher conference.	SA	A	D	SD
I rate the Parkside Elementary Staff/Faculty as excellent.	SA	A	D	SD
I rate the administrative staff as excellent.	SA	A	D	SD
I believe that my child would not receive a better education in another school in Camden.	SA	A	D	SD

Have you participated in any school activities this year? Yes No

If yes: What was your involvement? _____.

Would you do it again? Yes No

My child is a Male Female

How many years has your child attended Parkside Elementary School?

1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years Other

Thank You For Answering This Survey

Thank You For Your Cooperation

Parkside Elementary School
1227 Kenwood Ave.
Camden, NJ 08103-2815
(856) 966-8977

Dolores Sanchez
Principal

Migdalia Soto
Supervisor

December 13, 2000

Dear Staff Member,

A survey has been developed to determine the levels of parental participation in all facets of the school program and activities at Parkside School. As a member of the staff your opinions are greatly valued. For this reason, you are being asked to complete the enclosed survey. This should take no more than five minutes of your time.

Your willing participation will be greatly appreciated. Personal identification is not required. All responses are strictly confidential. The results will be reported only as group data.

Please complete the survey and return it to me by Friday, December 15, 2000.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Migdalia Soto
Supervisor

Teachers/Staff Survey

Please answer the following questions as directly and honestly as possible. Circle your response.

Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD)

The staff at Parkside School is friendly.	SA	A	D	SD
The staff at Parkside is caring.	SA	A	D	SD
The parents of my students give me the support I need.	SA	A	D	SD
The school is receptive to my students' needs.	SA	A	D	SD
I am receptive to my students' needs.	SA	A	D	SD
I welcome parents in my classroom.	SA	A	D	SD
I value my students' parents input and suggestions.	SA	A	D	SD
The communication from the school to home is appropriate.	SA	A	D	SD
I communicate with parents appropriately.	SA	A	D	SD
It is my responsibility to promote parent participation in school.	SA	A	D	SD
I provide opportunities for parents to participate in class activities.	SA	A	D	SD
The school provides opportunities for active parent participation.	SA	A	D	SD
Teachers should communicate with parents when children are doing well in class.	SA	A	D	SD
Teachers should communicate with parents only when their children are having problems in class.	SA	A	D	SD
I rate the Parkside Elementary Staff /Faculty as excellent .	SA	A	D	SD
I rate the administrative staff as excellent .	SA	A	D	SD

Have you conducted classroom activities that provide opportunities for parent involvement? ___Yes ___No

If yes: What did you do? _____
(use the back of this paper if necessary)

I am a ___Teacher ___Support Certificated Staff ___Support Staff (Non-certificated)
 ___Male ___Female

I have worked at Parkside Elementary School ___1-3 years ___4-6 years ___Other

Thank You For Taking The Time To Answer This Survey
Thank You For Your Cooperation

Appendix B
Parent-Community Activities

Parkside Elementary School
1227 Kenwood Avenue
Camden, New Jersey 08103
(856) 966-8977

A black and white line drawing of a child running towards the right. The child is wearing a cap and a backpack. They are surrounded by several open books of various sizes. A large pencil is positioned diagonally across the scene, with the child appearing to be running over it. The text "Back to School Night" is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the illustration.

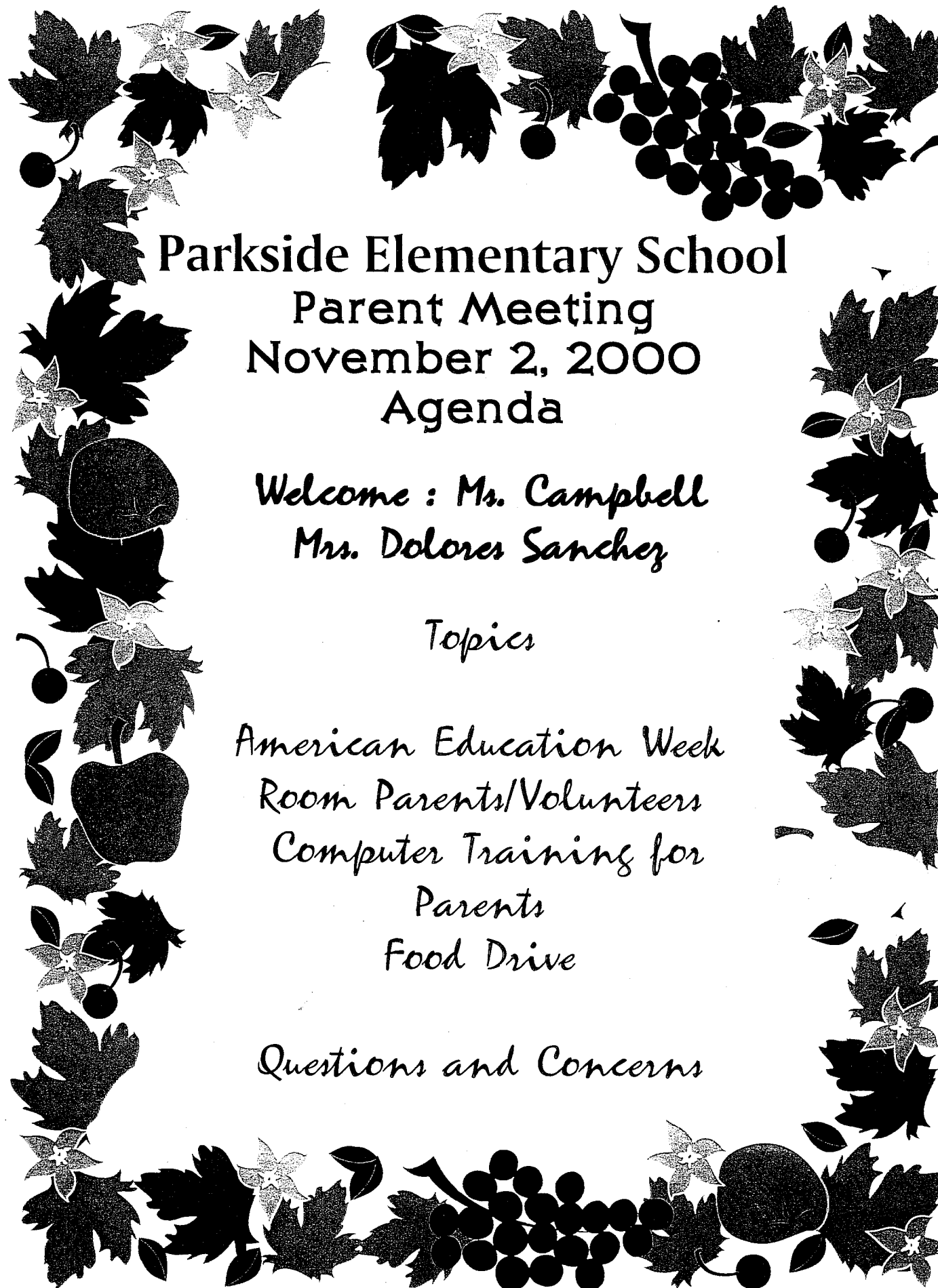
Back to School Night

Come out and meet your child's Teacher

When : September 28th, 2000
Time: 6:00pm

Where: Little Rock Baptist Church
1210 Kenwood Ave.
Camden, NJ 08103





Parkside Elementary School
Parent Meeting
November 2, 2000
Agenda

*Welcome : Mrs. Campbell
Mrs. Dolores Sanchez*

Topics

*American Education Week
Room Parents/Volunteers
Computer Training for
Parents
Food Drive*

Questions and Concerns



COFFEE CLUB

Have a cup of coffee with



US



Where: Parent Center

Time: 8:30 Til 9:00

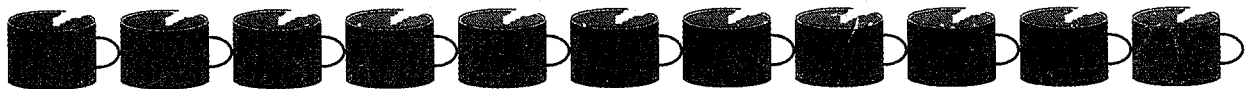
When: Monday - Friday

**Parkside School Welcomes All
Parents**

Mrs. D. Sanchez, Principal
Mrs. M. Soto, Supervisor

Ms. Cambell, Coordinator
Ms. T. Shields, Facilitator

966-8977



Parkside Room Parents Wanted!



Sign up to be involved in your child's classroom activities!

Being a room parent has many advantages!!!

- classroom representative at PTO meetings
- help with classroom parties and fieldtrips
- assist with PTO fundraisers
- help build school community
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOUR CHILD WILL BE PROUD OF YOU!**

Return this form to your child's classroom teacher by _____

Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Teacher's Name _____

Address: _____ Phone # _____

Parents are partners in education

PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Parent Volunteer Information

Dear Parent,

It is helpful for me to gather information about my students' parents for upcoming projects and events. I value your interests and expertise, and I encourage you to share your talents with us. Please complete the form below and return it to school as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Teacher signature

Parent _____ Child _____

Address _____ Phone _____

I enjoy the following hobbies: _____

My job is _____

I can contribute by:

----- being a parent helper

----- making phone calls

----- supplying materials

----- making projects at home

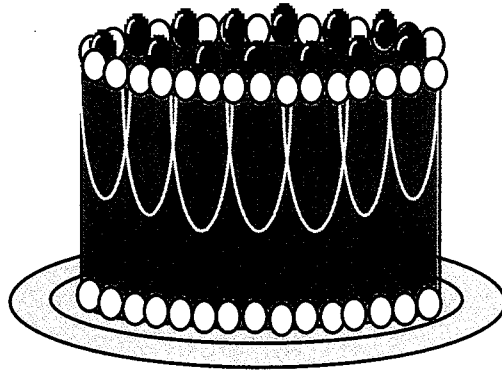
----- going on field trips

----- other _____

Parents Are Partners In Education

The Parkside Elementary PTA

First Fund Raising Bake Sale!!!



When: Friday, December 15, 2000

Time: 11:30 - 12:00 noon

Volunteer Bakers And Salespeople Are Needed!!!

Please return the registration portion to your child's
classroom teacher by December 11, 2000.

Yes, I would like to help make a difference at Parkside School.

Parent's name: _____ Phone: _____

Child's name: _____ Teacher: _____

I will be able to bake _____.

I will be able to sell baked goods during hours listed above _____.

**PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1227 KENWOOD AVENUE
CAMDEN, N. J. 08103
966-8977
MRS. DOLORES SANCHEZ, PRINCIPAL**

PARENT NEWS

JANUARY 2001

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Our school year is at mid-point. Soon students will be challenged with the second marking period quarterly tests and the Terra Nova/ESPA standardized test in April. Expect the homework load to increase as they review skills. It is important that students come to school daily, ready to learn, and on time. School begins at 8:25 AM.

The last day of the second marking period is January 31st. Parent conferences is tentatively scheduled for February 5th, 2:00 PM-6:00 PM. Report cards will be distributed at this time. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Our AFTER SCHOOL TUTORIAL PROGRAM is scheduled to begin January 30th. Selected students in grades 2-5 will be invited to participate. We encourage these students to participate and get the extra help in MATH, READING and WRITING. Applications will soon be distributed. The program will be held Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2:55 PM to 3:55 PM.

Parkside staff will soon begin a number of extra-curricular activities: Drama Club, Arts & Crafts Club (5th Grade), and fourth grade Math Club. We also have a number of students presently involved in Safeties and Newspaper Club. Students participating in extra-curricular activities must have teacher recommendation, and satisfactory attendance.

Winter can bring lots of snow and problems. Snow ball throwing is strictly prohibited. A number of students have been injured with snow balls. Students throwing snow balls will be disciplined. Please discuss with your child.

School is for learning. LEAVE TOYS AT HOME. Do not allow your child to bring toys to school. Please check your child's book bag before s(he) comes to school.

Sincerely,


Dolores Sanchez
Principal

LOOKING AHEAD

1/31--Last Day of 2nd Marking Period
2/5--Parent Teacher Conferences--2:00 PM--6:00 PM
2/16--NO SCHOOL, IN SERVICE DAY
2/19--NO SCHOOL, PRESIDENTS' DAY



Parkside Elementary School

1227 Kenwood Ave.
Camden, New Jersey 08103
(856) 966-8977
Transcopier (856) 342-8204

Mrs. Dolores Sanchez
Principal
dsanchez@camden.k12.nj.us

Mrs. Migdalia Soto
Supervisor
msoto@camden.k12.nj.us
Mr. Eric Valentino
Technology Coordinator
evalentin@camden.k12.nj.us

Parent / Guardian Name: _____ Student Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Grade: _____ Room# _____

The Parkside Elementary School is planning an after school computer training for parents. In order to plan efficiently, we need to know your experiences with the use of computers. Please answer the following questionnaire and return it to the school.

Beside each application category rate your experience and comfort level in each of the following applications using a scale of 1-4.

- | Experience | Comfort |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1 = very experienced | 1 = very comfortable |
| 2 = some experience | 2 = moderately comfortable |
| 3 = little experience | 3 = need some help to feel comfortable |
| 4 = no experience | 4 = need help to feel comfortable very much |

Application Category	Experience	Comfort Level
Computers in general		
Word processing packages		
Spreadsheets		
Databases		
Graphical applications		
Internet software (Netscape)		
Searching the Internet		
Download Information from the Internet		
Using tutorial programs		
Sending E-mail messages		
Reading E-mail messages		

_____ Yes, I would like to participate in the computer training Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

_____ No, I am not interested in the computer training at this time.

Do you have a computer at home?

_____ Yes, one _____ Yes, more than one _____ No

Thank you for your participation!

Parkside Elementary School

Computer Training For Parents

And

Community Members

Course Outline

Administrator: Ms. Migdalia Soto

Instructor: Mr. Eric Valentino

I) Desktop Navigation/Basic Macintosh

- Starting Up and Shutting Down Computers
- Mouse Manipulation
- Selecting Icons
- Opening/Closing Windows
- Creating Folders
- Menu Bar

II) Wordprocessing

- Create New Document/Setup
- Saving & Retrieving Files
- Format/Edit Text
- Input Graphics
- Create Slide Show

III) Spreadsheet

- Create New Document/Setup
- Format/Edit Cells
- Format/Edit Columns & Rows
- Create Charts





Parkside Elementary School
Computer Training For Parents
And
Community Members
Sign-in Sheet

Date: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
PARENTS ARE PARTNERS IN EDUCATION



**Parkside Elementary School
1227 Kenwood Ave.
Camden, NJ 08104
Mrs. Dolores Sanchez, Principal**

MARK THIS EVENT ON YOUR CALENDAR



WHAT: PARENT & COMMUNITY MEETING

WHEN: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2001

TIME: 9:30 A.M.

WHERE: PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

TOPIC: WHY IS PARKSIDE SCHOOL CALLED A COMER SCHOOL?

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**WHY: TO DISCOVER WHAT IMPACT THE COMER PROCESS WILL HAVE
ON YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION**

PRESENTER: MS. THERESA SHIELDS, FACILITATOR

For more information call 614-7610

Parkside School Parents present

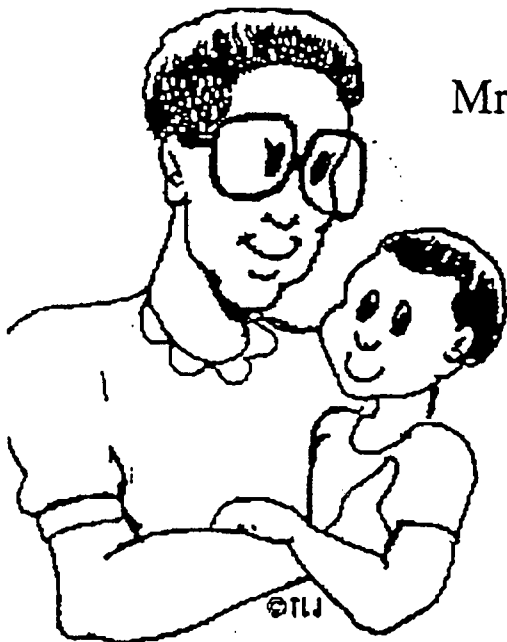
“Grandparents Meeting The Challenge in the 21st Century”

When:
March 15, 2001

Time:
9:30 A.M.

Place:
Parkside School Library

Speaker:
Mrs. Marianne Parker
of the
Antioch Baptist Church
Camden, N.J.



Breakfast

Menu:

Sausage, Bacon, Eggs,
Homefries, Danish,
Coffee, Tea

Appendix C
Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
Management Team Participants (SMT)

**Parkside Elementary School
1227 Kenwood Avenue
Camden, New Jersey 08103
(856) 966-8977**

Mrs. Dolores Sanchez, Principal

**PTO Meeting
Agenda**

Welcome

**Mrs. Dolores Sanchez
Presentation of PTO Board
Mrs. Kim Troy, President**

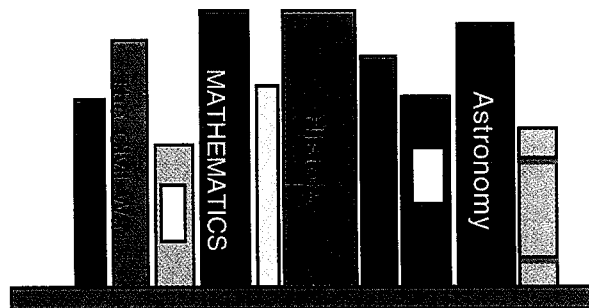
Ms. Tanya Tyson, Vice-President

Ms. Tamoka Wilson, Secretary

SMT Parents

**Ms. Brenda Talib
Ms. Zelda Wyatt
Ms. Robin Reyes
Ms. Antoinette Kirkland**

Parents Are Partners In Education



Appendix D
Comments from Parents, Staff, and Community Members

Comments and recommendations given by parents and staff

The school need to start a homework center for all grades to help children with homework . (Anonymous)

We need a homework hotline . (Anonymous)

Not enough information is send home with the homework . (Anonymous)

I would like the school to have an active after school beside school work . (Anonymous)

Parent involvement at Parkside has increased. We have a group of parents that volunteer at our school on a daily basis. We have a Coffee Club on Mondays and Fridays. Our parents meet once a month for parents workshops on different subjects. We also have a bake sale once a month and a gift shop on holidays. Our PTO gave every child in school a pencil and eraser for Valentines Day .

Ms. Campbell, Parent coordinator Parkside School

Being an active parent on the Parent Involvement Committee, has given me the opportunity to observe many things. I enjoy being in the Parent center and working with the parents and Mrs. Campbell. However, there is a need for equipment and other necessities. I truly believe more parents would get involved if the school had or has something to offer them. For instance: things that would better the parents, students, and Parkside. Parkside need to ask themselves, if we get parents involved What would we have for them to do? What equipment would we have for them to work with?. Last but not least, What space or place do we have for them to come together in?

Parkside parent, Mrs. Brenda Talib, parent Parkside School

A Thank You Note

I write to express my sincere gratitude to the people below for making the Parkside School parents computer training possible. The instructions were far beyond my expectations. Eventhough I had prior knowledge as how to access the Internet, the instructions were very RICH in contents .

Among other things, it taught me in more details, word processing spreadsheet. It was beneficial to me attending the training session and hope, the parents will cooperate with you in continuing the good work .

Once again I extend sincere thanks to:

Mrs. Sanchez(principal); Ms. Joan Cargill(Supervisor of Technology); Mr. Valentino(Instructor); and Ms. Soto(Course co-ordinator).

Mr. Sidike Mustapha, parent Parkside School

This is my second year teaching at Parkside Elementary. I have noticed a significant difference with parent involvement. Last year, I had one parent volunteer that was actively involved in my classroom. This year, I have several parents helping, offering their help, and calling on a regular basis. For example, two of my parents hold an office in our PTO. I have had parents help out in the classroom when my instructional assistant was absent. We have a golf program for first graders, and two parents work there everyday, and I have parents who volunteer often. I can t forget picture day. Several parents came in to help make sure that all students were looking their best. I have had parents on all of my field trips. Last year, I did not have one parent to volunteer on field trips. I am very grateful for my parents this year. I feel my students learn and behave much better knowing you have a good relationship with their parents. My door is always open for parents or anyone who wishes to come inside .

Mrs. Tanya Allen, first grade teacher Parkside School

TO: Migdalia Soto

FROM: Elizabeth Sánchez

RE: Computer Classes at Parkside
Instructor: Mr. Eric Valentino

DATE: Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Ms. Soto:

I want to express to you my sincere gratitude for giving me the opportunity to attend the Computer Classes at Parkside School, that were set up for parents and you kindly included me, a teacher.

I enjoyed each class very much. I learned basic skills to ensure appropriate usage of the computers at home and at school. These basic techniques can only help me improve my computer literacy and enhanced my teaching in the classroom. Among the many things I learned, I mostly enjoyed making greeting cards. We learned to make these with beautiful pictures, elegant lettering and to adjust all sorts of features. Also, we learned the basics of charts and further more the basic of word processing. Certainly it was worthwhile.

I hope that you would consider me for any future classes I can participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sánchez".

Elizabeth Sánchez

Biographical Data

Name	Migdalia Soto
High School	Luis Llorens Torres High School Juana Diaz, PR
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Science Secondary Education Catholic University of Puerto Rico Ponce, PR
Graduate	Master of Arts In Teaching Math/Science Fairleigh Dickinson University Teaneck, NJ Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Present Occupation	Supervisor Camden Board of Education Camden, NJ