PAPERFOLIO

A PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTING SKILLS AND PARENT TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

TOTAL OF 10 PAGES ONLY
MAY BE XEROXED

(Without Author's Permission)

GAIL M. BURRY

PAPERFOLIO

A Perspective on Parenting Skills and Parent Training Programs For School Counsellors

Gail M. Burry

In partial requirement
for Masters in Education
(Education Psychology: School Counselling)

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Table of Contents

Preface i

Paper #One

The Context and Evolution of Parenting Skills and Parent Training Programs: The Need for Criteria to Assess Parent Training Programs 2

Paper #Two

An Illustrative Example of Criteria Based Assessment of Two Parenting Programs: Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting 2

Paper #Three

A School Counsellor's Reflections; Advice and Suggestions for Setting Up and Delivering of Parents on Board 2

Preface

The primary role of the school counsellor is to help students. It is no longer adequate to offer direct counselling to students or to act as consultants to their teachers. Counsellors have come to realize that many problems children face are family related. Counsellors need to reach out to parents in order to help students. One of the many ways they are trying to accomplish this goal is through parent skills training.

These papers address the nature of parenting and offer a perspective on parenting skills training, particularly as it is offered to parents from late preschool to high school by school counsellors. They will provide school counsellors with background knowledge on parenting skills training and a foundation on which to critique parent training programs. These papers will allow counsellors to more effectively choose a program that will meet the needs of the parents taking part. Finally they will give some insight to school counsellors on the concerns of the initial setup, delivery, and termination of parent training programs, which may help avoid difficulties.

Below is a brief overview of each of the three papers.

Paper #One:

The Context and Evolution of Parenting Skills and Parent Training Programs: The need for Criteria to Assess Parent Training Programs

This paper will address how parenting has been practiced over the last century and the social changes that have contributed to this evolution. It will examine the current trends in parenting styles and what some parents are doing to change their old modes of parenting to keep

up with the present times. It appears that these changes have contributed to the increase in the number of parent training programs currently being developed and offered. The number of choices may be causing some counsellors to question which program they should be offering. In this paper, the author offers criteria that will enable school counsellors to critique parent training programs and, thus, choose the program which will best meet their needs and those of their parents.

Paper #Two:

An Illustrative Example of Criteria Based Assessment of Two Parenting Programs: Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

There are a variety of parent training programs on the market. School counsellors may find it difficult to decide which program will be most beneficial to their group. Research has shown that in order for parent training programs to be effective, they must meet a wide range of criteria. Paper One discusses the wide array of criteria school counsellors can use to critique parent training programs. This paper demonstrates to school counsellors how to evaluate or assess parent training programs based on the criteria proposed. The author assesses two parent training programs; Parents on Board, a relatively new program on the market(Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, a widely used program (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). Based on these evaluations, the author will identify the program she feels is the superior.

Paper #Three:

A School Counsellor's Reflections, Advice, and Suggestions for Setting Up and Delivering Parents on Board

The school counsellor may find that the delivery of a parenting program may not go as smoothly as one would like. The manuals accompanying parent training programs do offer useful insight, tips, and suggestions which may help ensure a smooth delivery. Because program developers may not be able to foresee all the difficulties that particular counsellors may encounter during the set up, delivery, and termination of a program, there inevitably will be problems.

The author had the opportunity to co-lead the parent training program, Parents on Board (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995). This program which is fairly new to the market, was designed for parents of children ages four to fourteen years of age. It focuses on the positive partnership between the home and the school in the overall development of children. It emphasizes child rearing strategies and skills for parents to work on at home that may help children in the school setting. During the experience, the co-leaders encountered a number of difficulties and complications.

The author offers tips, insights and suggestions deemed useful to counsellors selecting and offering a parenting program. These suggestions are enforced by program leader's guides and by the author's and another school counsellor's experiences as co-leaders. Insights gained by the author engaging in a process of journal writing and related reflection are also shared. The hope is that such information may help future leaders have successful and smooth set up, delivery, and termination of their programs.

Paper #1

The Context and Evolution of Parenting Skills and Parent Training Programs: The Need for Criteria to Assess Parent Training Programs

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

What is Parenting? 3

Parenting During the Last Century 3

Criteria for Selecting a Parent Training Program 5
- **Major Approaches to Parent Training** 6
  - Adlerian Approach 6
  - Behavioural Approach 8
  - Humanistic Approach 9
  - Developmental Approach 10
  - Systems Approach 13
- **Elements of Quality Parent Training Programs** 14
  - Discipline 14
  - Communication 16
  - Cognitive Stimulation 17
  - An Emphasis on the Importance of "Self" 18
  - Support for Independent Effort 21
  - Support Groups 22
  - Training of Facilitators 25
  - Program Adaptability 26
  - Duration, Cost and Setting 27

Summary 28

References 30

Introduction

The primary goal of the school counsellor is to help students. To attain this, many school counsellors have come to realize that direct counselling with students and consultation with their teachers alone is no longer adequate. Many problems children face are rooted in their homes and more specifically in aspects of parenting experiences these children receive. Because parental influence has a greater impact on students than any other (Hewlett, 1991), it is becoming apparent that counsellors should begin to direct some of their efforts toward students' parents and care givers. To accomplish the goal of helping parents and care givers with intervention strategies to help raise their children, many school counsellors are providing outreach programs in the area of parenting skills training. Helping parents meet the developmental needs of students and helping parents prevent early school problems from interfering with their children's development is one of the intentions of these programs (Conroy & Meyer, 1994).

The popularity of parent training has grown over the last thirty years (Fine, 1980). The changes in society, family dynamics, the women's movement and the impact of technology have helped alter the nature of parenting. Some individuals have found it difficult to make the adjustments needed to their parenting styles to help them meet these social changes. Parent training programs are one way that some parents have been able to obtain assistance (Bijou, 1984).

These changes have led to an increase in the number of parent training programs being developed and offered by school counsellors. The increase in the need and the availability of parent training programs has left some school counsellors baffled as to whether they should

develop their own programs or whether they should choose one that is already developed. If they decide to adopt an existing program, the question becomes, which one?

This paper will discuss changes in society over the last century which have made school counsellors feel it is necessary to offer parenting programs. It will also provide school counsellors with an overview of currently available parenting programs and the assumptions and the foundations upon which they are based. This paper will also provide a set of criteria that will enable counsellors to evaluate parent training programs being considered for adoption.

What is Parenting?

What makes an individual a parent? While the word "parenting" comes from the Latin root meaning "to give birth", the word, as it is currently used, means much more (Fagot, 1995). It now includes providing for children's physical well being, discipline, and stimulation. Parenting styles may differ depending on the culture, socioeconomic situation, and family dynamics. Child rearing goes beyond the influence of the immediate family to include many of the political, educational and social institutions (Ford & Lerner, 1992).

Parenting During the Last Century

Parenting and the family institutions are presently receiving considerable attention. Individuals only have to look at the hundreds of publications, television programs, and workshops being offered on this topic to come to that conclusion. However, a historical look at the importance placed on the parenting role shows that parenting was given very little attention prior to the1960's (French, 1995). Historians appeared to place more importance on the male

dominated topics of world politics, war, economics and diplomacy.

In general, up until a century ago parents regarded their children as mere possessions (Campion, 1995). During the industrialization and urbanization of the 1880's some parents neglected to provide the basic necessities for their children; abandoning them (Swift, 1995), selling them off in times of economic depression, or sending them out to work in order to help support the family (Karpowitz, 1980). These facts indicate that parents in general had a great deal of control over their children and the state did not intervene to protect the young. Campion (1995) noted that a society to prevent the cruelty to animals was established before one to protect the rights of children.

Over the last century there has been gradual change to the rights of children and the role of parents. As early as 1891, concerns about neglected children culminated in protective legislation in Ontario with the first Child Welfare Agency (Swift, 1995). There has also been a continual push to ensure the rights of children. Evidence of this is apparent in the development of the Child Protection Act (Berstein, Paulseth, Ratecliffe, & Scarcella, 1972).

The brief history of parenting over the last century indicates a move away from the autocratic mode of raising children (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) that saw rewards and punishment as the principle form of discipline to a more democratic approach of respect and equality. It appears that Proverbs 13:24 (Common Bible, 1973, p.568), "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him", may be taking on a whole new interpretation. Many have interpreted this verse to mean that sometimes discipline must come from physical punishment. However, Carey (1994) suggests that the rod is no longer a symbol of a punishment, but a process of guiding children, as a shepherd would use his staff to guide his

sheep.

The changes in our society and in parenting over the last century have left some parents wondering how to go about raising their children. They may no longer have the extended family to go to for assistance. However, if those family members are present, both their parenting knowledge and skills may be outdated and, hence, less an aid to present-day parents. These changes have left some individuals looking for assistance and some school counsellors providing it through outreach programs such as parent skills training.

There are many parent training programs on the market. Some of the most popular include the Systematic Training for Effective Parents (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976), Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1980), and Parents on Board (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995). Because parent skills training is a new service in some school settings, counsellors may know very little about this specific area. They may not be familiar with the philosophies and goals of published parent training programs, their content, their instructional format or the necessary skills needed to deliver them. Some counsellors may also lack an awareness of criteria by which to assess published programs. This could hinder them in choosing the program most beneficial to participating parents. A list of criteria may be helpful to school counsellors to enable them to assess parent training programs. The following section will discuss criteria that were generated from the literature and from parent training programs, which may enable school counsellors to assess parenting programs.

Criteria for Selecting a Parent Training Program

When assessing a parent training program, there are a number of factors that should be taken into account. These factors include: (1) the degree to which the program is founded on a sound theoretical approach or conceptual foundation, (2) the range of content and the specific topics addressed in the program, and (3), the structure, organization and flexibility of the delivery format (McInnis-Dittrich, 1996; Bornstein, 1995; Campion, 1995; Spoth & Bedman, 1995; Dangel & Polster, 1984; Fine, 1980). Each of these areas is discussed below.

Major Approaches to Parent Training

Most parenting programs have an approach or conceptual foundation upon which they base their explanations and activities. Currently there are four major theoretical orientations that can be readily identified, namely the Adlerian, behaviourist, humanist and developmental approaches (Roberts, 1994). Each of these approaches is discussed below. Attention is paid to the degree to which each meets the needs of a "sound approach" with their specific strengths and weaknesses. A newly evolving systemic approach to parent training, growing out of the traditional approaches, is also discussed below.

Adlerian Approach

Adlerian parent training programs are based primarily on the assumptions of Alfred Adler (Burnett, 1988). Adler states that both the acceptable behaviour and misbehaviour of children serve a purpose. Parents must be able to understand the purpose of both types in order to help their children. Such understanding helps eliminate both parents' and children's faulty

beliefs and helps correct their misguided thoughts and behaviours. To accomplish these goals, parents are given information on the use of a nonthreatening approach to child rearing and how to use both logical and natural consequences and encouragement in their responses to their children (McWhirter, 1980). Adlerian programs typically emphasize teamwork. The goal of the program is to help parents foster in their children healthy personalities through encouraging self-directed achievement. Meeting this goal, according to program proponents, enables the children to act responsibility within a social group (Roberts, 1994). A parent training program based on Adlerian principles can stand alone or be used in conjunction with other approaches (Gladding, 1995), including behavioural, humanistic, and developmental.

To realize their goals, Adlerian programs typically involve group discussions, text reading, homework, use of specified exercise, role-playing, and log maintenance. It is noted that embedded in the program is a strong emphasis on the developmental stages and typical age characteristics of children.

As noted, Adlerians state that parents and children should work together to help solve problems and overcome difficulties. In spite of this, children are not typically included directly in the delivery of any aspect of the program. It is the author's view that such programs might be stronger if the teamwork process fostered an environment in which children are given an opportunity to learn and participate. Unfortunately, that does not happen. Other criticisms of this parenting approach state that followers view all problems as socially based and do not take into consideration other factors that may be playing a role in the difficulties such as medical conditions or children's own innate personality (Gladding, 1995). Research regarding the effectiveness of Alderian based parenting programs does indicate that there is some change in

parental attitudes, however, the methodologies used to prove the effectiveness of programs are weak and limiting (Levant, 1986).

Behavioural Approach

Behavioural research is the second basis upon which may parent training programs have been developed. This approach and the resultant programs proposes that children's behaviour is a result of social learning and socialization rather than their innate personality or a disorder (Rudestam, 1982). Proponents of these programs state that all behaviour is learned through social interactions with significant others such as siblings or peers, with the main agent of socialization being parents (Roberts, 1994). Behaviour may be increased through reinforcement or eliminated through a lack of reinforcement from these significant others. Parent education based on such research attempts to teach parents specific skills in reinforcement, consistency and setting clear expectations. Closely linked to the behaviour model are notions of the importance of parents as role models and of the importance of children learning through imitation (Smith & Cowie, 1991). The behavioural approach can be used alone or in conjunction with other approaches including the humanistic or the Adlerian (Gladding, 1995). Such programs encourage parents to acquire a new way of associating with their children which is focused, short term, and can be applied to a variety of situations. Although human behaviour is caused by both observable and unobservable factors, behaviourists are concerned primarily with the overt behaviours (Simpson, 1980). It is noted that absent from this approach is a strong emphasis on the developmental stages and typical age characteristics of children (Rudestam, 1982). To realize their goals, programs based on the behavioural principles typically involve

lectures, demonstrations and role-playing.

There is impressive research to support the effectiveness of parent training programs using this approach as their foundation. Critics of the programs feel that they concentrate on here and now behaviours, without looking at the broader life issues. These programs place little, if any, emphasis on the past, the unconscious, on feelings or on the stage development of children (Gladding, 1995).

Humanistic Approach

The 'humanist' theory was developed based on the work of Carl Rogers (Gladding, 1995). This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding children's feelings. "In programs based on this approach, parents are taught to respond to their children's feelings rather than using rewards, reinforcement or consequences of behaviour" (Roberts, 1994, p.75). This approach does not believe in punitive measures. It emphasizes communication in order to enhance mutual satisfaction for the child and the parent. To realize their goals, programs typically involve written exercises, role playing, and demonstrations and modeling by the instructor.

While Humanists emphasize stages through which individuals move, these stages are not heavily based on descriptions of children's age related behaviours or their cognitive development (Gordon, 1980). Unfortunately, research in this approach is limited and weak with the majority coming from unpublished dissertations and pre and post-test studies. Little data has been gathered from longitudinal studies (Roberts, 1994).

Related to the theoretical foundations of these approaches is an understanding of the

stages of children's development. Critics feel that such as understanding should be a key component in parent training programs (Wagonseller & McDowell, 1979). Many of the skills parents acquire during the training process and subsequently implement in their day to day child rearing activities are specific to the development stages of their children. For a parenting program to be successful, it must offer to parents a knowledge of children's 'stage specific' behaviours and demands. These demands have significant implications for parenting practices.

Developmental Approach

Developmental approaches are based on the observations of highly similar and widely shared patterns of child behaviour. There is considerable literature describing and discussing the various stages through which children progress. Developmentalists assume that behaviour originates from both within children and from the interaction of their innate tendencies and competencies with the experiences and opportunities offered children in their environment. Professionals in the field of child development have varied explanations for the specific reasons for these stages and varying views as to the ages at which children go through them. They also differ as to the degree to which these stages can be modified or redirected as a result of offered experiences. While stage theories can trace their roots back to Shakespeare and more recently to the turn of the century works of Freud, most current thinking on children's developmental stages is heavily influenced by the works of Montessori, Gesell and more recently Piaget.

Gesell (1880-1961) (Ilg & Ames, 1955) stated that the behavioural changes that take place in children are determined within and are patterned in largely predictable stages. For example, average two-year-olds will all generally exhibit the same behaviours when eating, and

will eventually or drastically change as they reach the age of three. Although parents cannot control or influence children within a stage, they can have some impact on children's behaviour by the environments they both create and their children interact with. Gesell feels that parents need an understanding of these various stages to be able to help them recognize them when they occur and thus reduce their shock and surprise at their children's actions. Knowing what to expect at certain stages in the lives of children will help parents remain calm and help them avoid impatience and discouragement. Such knowledge will allow them to address undesirable behaviours more efficiently.

Montessori (1870-1952) also presented the idea that children go through developmental stages. She stated that individuals are educated according to the laws of natural development (Prakasam, 1966). To understand these laws, it is necessary to study the characteristics of each period of development. She described the development of children in three stages. The first stage occurs between birth and six years, the second stage between six and twelve years, and the final stage twelve and eighteen years. While development does not end at eighteen, this age marks the boundary of childhood. All stages are flexible and describe averages of what children go through. Montessori was very interested in the needs and requirements of children as they pass through the various periods of physical and mental changes. Her ideas provided parents with guidelines on how to communicate, play, love, discipline, and stimulate their children as they passed through the various stages.

A major and widely quoted author who has had a very significant effect on the approach foundations of many parenting programs is Jean Piaget (1896-1980) (Chattin-McNichols, 1992). Piaget describes four major stages which he labels: sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete

operational and the formal operational (Smith, 1991). The sensori-motor stage occurs during the first two years of life. Children learn through the use of sensing and moving during this stage. The pre-operational stage occurs between two and seven years. Children start making intuitive judgments about relationships. They learn language and symbols and their thinking is dominated by perception, based on their experiences with concrete objects. At this stage, they are still largely attributing one function to an object. The third stage is the concrete operational. Children go through this stage between the ages of seven and eleven. At this point in time they realize that there are consequences to their actions, their previous experiences are prerequisites to new ideas and they are better able to manipulate information and organize their thoughts. The final stage, the formal operational period, commences around eleven years. At this point children acquire the ability to work abstractly and see logical relationships between both concrete and abstract concepts. They are able to engage in problem solving. Piaget stated that all children go through these stages in the same sequence but the ages at which the stages are achieved vary from one child to another.

The understanding associated with these stage theories has had a significant impact on many parenting programs offered by school counsellors because an understanding of how children think can influence the way parents communicate, discipline and stimulate their children. A parent training program based on developmental stages provides parents with insights on how they should interact with their children depending on their age. These programs seek to help parents understand their children's developmental stages through lectures and demonstrations.

Most authors claim that their parenting programs have a clear and identifiable approach

that sets the plan of action from which their programs are created. They are claiming to provide a structure from which to judge the impact of the program and the progress participants make toward targeted outcomes (Hansen, Stevic & Warner, 1972). The four approaches which provide bases for most parenting programs, have each been validated by some research findings. In spite of the widespread acceptance of these approaches, there is, however, little evidence to suggest that there is clear support for the superiority of anyone over the other (Dembo, Sweitzer & Lauritzen, 1985). As previously mentioned, most of the studies have limitations and come from unpublished dissertations. Many have flaws existing in their methodologies and most rely on pre and post-test studies. These programs typically involve only one parent, exclude participation of children and fail to directly support or involve other agencies like the school. Criticism by some professionals of current parenting programs indicates that a new paradigm for parenting is needed (Roberts, 1994). The 'systems approach' offers an alternative model which seeks to address these weaknesses.

Systems Approach

Systems approaches typically see the family as part of a larger social system and propose that to change or improve the functioning of a family, it is necessary to involve the individual members of both the immediate and extended family and other agencies with which the family interacts. Taking a systemic approach means broadening the scope of parent training programs so that they at least include both parents and children. This approach to helping families is not new to counselling, Satir in 1975 demonstrated how she worked with the whole family to overcome difficulties. Followers of Satir's work feel that the family is an integrated whole, and

what affects one member can influence them all. There have been some suggestions that the same approach is necessary in order to make parent training programs more effective and to realistically help the family unit.

It is the view of the author, however, that while there are differing approaches to the offering of parenting programs, programs themselves have tended to reflect traditions in child care perhaps dating back to Montessori and other earlier preschool educators. Current programs also have been heavily informed by both the needs of children and the changing situations and needs deemed to exist for their parents. It should also be noted that programs within a given approach tend to vary in the depth and the breadth of their program content. In spite of these differences, most parenting programs deliver information on discipline skills, communication skills, and facts pertaining to normal child development. As discussed below, there is much sharing of the actual "content" offered across parenting programs.

Elements of Quality Parent Training Programs

Parent training programs, while having different approaches, tend to typically address many-shared foci. Below is a listing and brief discussion of factors to consider when reviewing and selecting a parenting program. Consideration of these factors by persons developing individualized programs or customizing existing commercially available packages is also deemed useful. These factors have been identified through reviewing both specific parent training programs and the literature addressing this area.

Discipline

Most parent training programs offer instruction in discipline. This component of the parenting program is essential because parents sometimes confuse discipline and punishment and view it as one and the same. Punishment is linked to an authoritarian approach to child rearing (Baumrind, 1996). It concentrates on the negative actions of children and does not reinforce the positive. Parents following this approach tend to use demands and controlling techniques to obtain desirable behaviours. They exert their power over children with little or no regard for mediation or compromise.

Parents who use discipline tend to be authoritative, demanding, and highly responsive (Baumrind, 1996). They have high positive behavioural expectations of their children, but allow them the opportunity to negotiate and question. The use of discipline encourages self-control, emphasizes natural consequences, does not attack the personal worth of children and teaches them responsibility (Wagonseller & McDowell, 1979).

Authoritative parents use child management as a prevention tool. Parents hope that children will demonstrate self-control and not allow themselves to get out of hand. Authoritarian parents use punishment as an intervention tool to stop the behaviour after it starts. Wagonseller and McDowell (1979) state that authoritative parents enhance the positive development of children.

As previously stated, embedded in most parenting programs is a focus on knowing the interests, needs and age/stage characteristics of children. This knowledge allows parents both to better meet the needs of their children by pro-active means and thereby to avoid problem situations requiring them to exert some form of more punitive discipline. Disciplining as it

pertains to parenting, is better understood as consistently, supporting, and encouraging the positive aspects of children's behaviour instead of concentrating on the negative.

To improve disciplinary skills, parents must be able to communicate effectively with their children. A second component of a quality parent training program may include instruction on effective communication techniques.

Communication

Of the many skills involved in parenting, communication is the most important, and the most difficult to learn and use (Wagonseller & McDowell, 1979). The art of communicating involves much more than just talking and listening. Parents and children relay information through the content of verbal messages and through intonation and through their body language.

As was discussed in the 'Discipline' section, authoritative parents are highly demanding, but they are also highly responsive, meaning that they communicate effectively with their children. Parents and children alike are active members of the communication process. Parents listen to children and children listen to parents. Through discussing, negotiating, and compromising, they try to come to some acceptable agreement.

Parent education approaches have been shown to affect parent-child communication (Bredehoff & Hey, 1985). Results indicate that the parent/child relationship is significantly improved through more open communication (Roberts, 1994). However, one of the many requirements when communicating with children is the ability to interact with them at their developmental stage. A parent may ask a child to do an activity, but the child may be unable to comprehend or carry out the act due to the overwhelming number of steps they must remember

of their lack of verbal knowledge.

Parents' ability to communicate effectively at the developmental level of his or her children can be an influential factor in the overall growth of those children. Positive interaction from both perspectives may be related to the ability of parents to stimulate cognitive development in their children.

Cognitive Stimulation

"Cognitive abilities are clusters of mental skills that enable individuals to know, to be aware, to think, to reason, to criticize, and to be creative. They all lead to an understanding of how people learn" (Lerner, 1997, p.199). The cognitive abilities of individuals may vary, but when provided with positive cognitive stimulation, there is an improved chance of recipients reaching their full potential.

The cognitive growth of individuals is influenced by their interactions with their environment, beginning at the time of birth and continuing on throughout their lives. The early years in the lives of children are crucial. It is at this time that they develop their language skills, the foundation of all learning (Lerner, 1997), their values, and their ability to socialize. Parents as first teachers, play a significant role in the cognitive development of their children and thus should have knowledge in this area. This understanding will enable them to provide a stimulating environment that can help their children improve their chances of reaching their full potential.

Parent training programs offered by school counsellors may help parents reach this goal. The quantity and quality of parent offered cognitive stimulation are influenced by the

developmental stage/age of children. As previously discussed in this paper, the stage/age of children may determine how parents will communicate with them and what types of stimulation will be provided. Cognitive stimulation can come in various forms and may include play, music, toys, story telling, reading, expression of love and respect and encouragement.

As children pass through the various developmental stages/ages, both the forms of cognitive stimulation and individuals contributing to it will alter. Early in the lives of children, parents along with toys and play, are the main providers of cognitive stimulation (Cutright, 1992). The author feels that it may be easier to provide such stimulation during early years as children are likely to be very enthusiastic about learning. They want to investigate and seek out new experiences and to build on to their knowledge bases. However, as children get older, parents' success at providing cognitive stimulation may diminish. Influences from other sources including the information learned at school, from their peers and from other aspects of their environment may have a greater impact on children. These settings and the individuals involved in them may promote cognitive stimulation through interaction and discussions with others in which they research, question, critique, and analyze.

Parent training programs may help parents provide improved cognitive stimulation regardless of the age of their children. Providing stimulation to help children reach their full potential can also help them improve their perceptions of themselves.

An Emphasis on the Importance of "Self"

The "self" is a complex attribute of a person that begins at birth and continues to develop throughout the life span. The 'self" is influenced both by how we view ourselves and how

others perceive us in terms of our appearance, physical and mental capacities, vocational potential, size and strength (Verderber & Verderber, 1983). One's perceptions of one's attributes, whether negative or positive, impact on the development of one's self-concept, self-esteem, and self-confidence. For example, children who have difficulty reading and who repeatedly have been told they will never succeed in this area, may develop a low perception of themselves.

Parents can play a major role in helping their children avoid such negativity and in the development of a positive sense of "self". As discussed previously in this paper, parents usually play the most significant role in the development of their children's sense of self. A parent training program should include the necessary skills to help parents raise children who have a positive "self". To accomplish this goal, it is useful if parents first have a positive image of themselves as this allows them to be confident role models for their children (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976).

Parent training programs can help parents develop a positive "self" and provide them with strategies and skills to help their children do the same. Through the encouragement and positive interaction of a group, parents can come to realize that they are not alone in the difficulties they are encountering with their children (Alessi, 1987). The group can help bring out the positive aspects of their parenting style and provide beneficial feedback and suggestions. Carrying out and having success with activities at home and during the sessions can be a boost in the positive development of the "self" of parents.

Parents who have developed positive self concepts, will be more influential as effective role models and thus better able to help their children develop positive self-concepts. Some of

the skills deemed necessary to help children develop a positive "self" include effective communication and discipline skills. Through proper communication, parents can praise and encourage their children. Cutright (1992) states that encouragement of any completed activity by children should not be followed a by "but" as would be seen when a parent said, "I like the way you have your pictured coloured, next time stay within in the lines." Usually this disapproving connotation encourages the development of a negative self-concept. Instead, effective communication, such as discussing the coloured picture, may allow children to point out the great things they have done and to seek ways they can improve on their next picture.

Effective discipline may also be a factor in the development of children's positive "self". Parents should discipline their children in a fashion that is not too rigid or too laid back. Parents who are loving, warm, and able to implement firm disciplinary procedures, usually have children with higher self-esteem (Brody & Shaefer, 1982). Other factors which can help parents increase their children's positive "self" include having them engage in meaningful chores where they are encouraged and receive praise, as well as allowing children to express their feelings whether they are fear, love, anger or sadness. "Children with good self-esteem are able to learn as much as their ability allows, while those with poor self-esteem usually will not" (Cutright, 1992, p.81).

Effective communication skills, understanding and using effective discipline techniques, being knowledgeable regarding child development, providing cognitive stimulation, and helping improve children's positive "self" image are essential ingredients in a parent training program. These are the skills that parents should carry over into their day to day child rearing practices. Unfortunately the significance and the importance of this content can be lost if the parent training program is ineffectively delivered. The following section discusses further essential

criteria useful when assessing parent training programs including; the instruction format, the supports for parental independent effort, the use of support groups, the ease of training the facilitator, program adaptability, and the duration, cost and setting.

Instruction

Parent training programs vary according to the methods of instruction. Delivery may be in the form of videocassettes, audio cassettes, short lectures, role-playing, modeling and small and large group discussions. While programs formats vary, those that contain a wide array of presentation forms as well as those that allow parents to actively participate in the learning process should experience the highest rate of success (Wyckoff, 1980).

The success of parent training programs may depend on how well the instruction formats align themselves with the individual learning styles of the participants. "Learning styles" are those modalities by which individuals acquire information. Individual learners learn in different ways. They include visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic modalities (Lerner, 1997). While for most people the visual channel is the dominant mode of learning, adding sound to the image, as is the case with videocassettes, or pictures with discussions, enhances the learning process (Jasper, 1991).

Using a variety of instructional tools and being aware of the differences in preferred learning styles will make teaching, learning and interacting more enjoyable for everyone (Lowenthal, Landerholm, & Augustyn, 1994). The use of independent study can also be a contributing factor to the overall effectiveness of a parent training program.

Support for Independent Effort

"Independent study" is the label used to describe the work parents do outside the group setting to learn and practice the skills presented during the sessions. Its nature and quantity will vary from program to program, or may include written assignments, readings from the parent handbook, and putting into practice the skills learned from the program.

Independent study is an essential component of many parent training programs (Fine, 1980). Some programs require it, while others will only encourage it. If parents are left on their own to decide for themselves about homework, many may not do it. As suggested above, independent study contributes to the overall effectiveness of a program. The author feels that it should be a requirement, not an option. Just once or twice a week training sessions may be less effective than a program which encourages independent study. The use of independent study allows participants to receive greater benefits and encourages practice in the group and at home. Doing work at home also gives parents the opportunity to carry out activities in real life situations and when back in class, to gain reinforcement and feedback from the group (Gladding, 1995).

Support Groups

In the past, parents could turn to their extended families for assistance in raising children. The disintegration of the extended family (Katz, 1992) has forced some parents to seek support from groups such as are a part of parent training programs. Although parents attend training sessions for the primary reason of learning how to offer better child care, the secondary benefits can be just as beneficial.

Yalom (1970) has identified eleven curative (therapeutic) factors that are found in successful groups. The author outlines the eleven curative factors which pertain directly to parent training programs that are conducted by school counselors. These factors include:

- Instillation of hope: assurance that treatment will work. When setting up a parent training program, it can be beneficial to have a member who has taken the program before and has experienced success with the skills acquired. Involving such a person will help new members believe that programs such as theirs can offer them help.
- Universality: what seems unique is often similar experience of another group member. Some parents feel that they are alone in the experiences they encounter with the upbringing of their children. Parent training programs offer a place where parents come to realize that they are not unique, as many parents have gone through similar situations.
- Imparting of information: instruction and how to deal with life problems usually through discussion. Through their group discussions, parents can learn from each other and from the trainer regarding effective child-rearing strategies. They learn what has and has not worked for others.
- Altruism: sharing experiences and thoughts with others and helping by giving of one's self, working for the common good. For parents who participate in parenting programs, through discussions and their thoughts, are working to help themselves and to help other parents within the group.
- Corrective recapitulation of the primary family group: reliving early familial conflicts

correctly and resolving them. In a training program, parents are provided with the opportunity to describe the conflicts they encounter with their children with the hope of finding possible solutions.

- Development of socializing techniques: learning basic social skills. Parents may learn social skills that will enable them to improve their interaction with other members of society, including their children
- Imitative behaviour: modeling positive actions of other group members. Parent may be able to imitate and acquire positive behaviours from other members of the group.
- Interpersonal learning: gaining insight and correctively working through past experiences. This allows parents to gain insight about past experiences with their children and work through areas of difficulty.
- Group cohesiveness: therapeutic relationship between group members, group members and the leader, and the group as a whole. Group interaction offers peer support.
- Catharsis: experiencing and expressing feelings. Parents are provided with an opportunity in a group situation to express their concerns and their feelings without being judged or ridiculed.
- Existential factors: accepting responsibility for one's life in basic isolation from others, recognition of one's own mortality, and the capriciousness of existence. Parents may be able to identify mistakes they have made in their child rearing practices and take responsibility for them.

These factors indicate how a parent training program can go beyond the implicit content of the program and create a supportive atmosphere for parents. Contacts made in the support

group may develop into life long friendships or offer a person who can be contacted in times of need. The facilitator may also act as a consultant beyond the life of the group in situations when parents need additional help or assistance.

To create a supportive and learning atmosphere from the initial setup stages through to the final sessions may be a challenge for some school counsellors. To ensure that the delivery of programs goes as smoothly as possible, it is necessary for facilitators to choose programs that they feel competent to deliver and at the same time will meet the needs of parents.

Training of Facilitators

There has been an increase in the number of parent training programs being developed. However, little research has been done on preparing and evaluating instructors who carry out these programs. There are currently no national standards (Fine, 1980). Persons leading parent training groups can range from expert, to adequate, to the incompetent.

Dembo et al. (1985) state that the instructional leader is an important variable in the parent training program. Individuals offering these programs should have experience and credentials and parents should be informed of these from the start.

School counsellors are conducting many of the parent training programs being offered in the schools. These professionals have taken on the role not necessarily because of their familiarity with the program being offered, but because they have knowledge of the social, emotional, and behavioural milestones of normal child development, which are essential to understanding parent-child interactions. They also possess other desirable competencies which are linked in their professional training including empathy and a genuine desire to help others

(Gladding, 1995).

Although offering parent training is becoming an essential part of the role of the school counsellor, some do not feel prepared to conduct such a service (Conroy & Mayer, 1994). Typically there is no pre-service training to carry out these programs and counsellors are finding it necessary to self-educate. Counsellors usually become familiar with programs by reading through them, taking workshops offered by individuals who have conducted the program, or by co-leading a program with someone who has experience in this area.

Often only by becoming self-educated in a parent training program, can counsellors learn if that program contains the information and skills they want to foster in their parents. Familiarity with a program will allow counsellors to determine if it can be adapted or modified to meet the needs of their parents.

Program Adaptability

There are on the market some excellent parent training programs which school counsellors can offer. Often, however, a single packaged program may not meet the needs of targeted parents or may include information that is not relevant to the group. A school counsellor should be able to make modifications to programs to ensure that parents' expectations are met. Any chosen program should act as a guide for trainers. The program selected may provide a format and sequence, which counsellors should be able to augment with alternative materials when parents express a specific concern not addressed or the counsellor feels that an issue is not being addressed adequately.

Many facilitators use only the leader's guide and read directly from the program's

manual with little or no modification. The content is sometimes redundant and dry. When program staff members relate personal experiences regarding parenting and when they seek active discussion of problem areas, the resultant experiences are often favoured in consumer satisfaction surveys (Wyckoff, 1980).

The content and instructional formats of many programs can be modified if necessary to keep the interest and meet the needs of parents. Sometimes, program modifications may need to be made from the initial set up stages in order to attract parents or throughout the program to keep their interest.

Duration, Cost and Setting

It is important to assess prior to offering a parent training program the parents who may want to take part in the training program. This will enable the leader to decide which program to offer looking at its content, cost and length. "Parents today have less time, energy and other available resources for them to parent effectively" (Roberts, 1994, p74). When counsellors choose a program, they should be cognizant of the duration (Hopkins, 1984), the expense and the setting. These three factors can deter parents from attending the program.

A program offered by the school, should be one that is available to all interested parents, not just those who can spare the expense or get to the meetings. The author feels that it is wise to deliver programs in the least expensive and most time efficient manner without compromising the effectiveness of the program. School counsellors like many in the education field can be very resourceful when offering programs and they should be encouraged to make modifications to reduce these possible deterrents. The intent must be to make the program accessible to all

parents who want to attend.

All the aforementioned criteria should be taken into account when selling or selecting a parent training program. School counsellors can use these to assess the numerous programs that are available to them. The assessment procedure will allow the counsellor to choose and offer the program that will best meet the needs of the parents attending the sessions.

Summary

Evidently the interest in parenting training, the levels of perceived need, and the sheer number of parent training programs have increased over the last thirty years. This growth has been influenced by parents needs to modify their parenting skills to keep up with the shifts in society and more specifically, the nature of the family. In the past, parents used an autocratic approach to raising their children that saw rewards and punishment as the principle forms of discipline. Some parents viewed their children as mere possessions; selling them off for money or putting them to work for financial gains. There has been a gradual change over the last century away from this way of thinking. In general, parents today use a more democratic approach of respect and equality in raising their children.

Some parents have found it difficult to raise their children using the democratic approach. Many parents are looking for assistance and school counsellors are offering their services to parents in the form of parenting training programs. While there is an abundance of parent training programs that are available to school counsellors, it has left some in the field with significant concerns relating to how to go about choosing the most appropriate and beneficial for their situation. This paper offers a set of criteria by which to assess parent training

programs. Some of these criteria include: (1) the degree to which the program is based on a sound theoretical approach or conceptual foundation, (2) the range of content and the specific topics addressed, and (3) the structure, organization and flexibility of the delivery format. The criteria are offered in this paper are intended to help answer questions of school counsellors and make better the services they offer.

References

Alessi, J. (1987). Encouraged parents—encouraging teachers: The key to successful parent study groups. Individual Psychology Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research and Practice, 43(2), 195-201.

Baumrind, D. (1996). The discipline controversy revisited. Family Relations, 45(4), 405-414.

Berstein, M. M., Paulseth, D. A., Ratecliffe, R. H., & Scarcella, G. M. (1972). Child Protection Law in Canada. Carswell.

Bijou, S. W. (1984). Parent training: Actualizing the critical conditions of early childhood development. In R. F. Dangel & R.A. Polster (Eds.), Parent training: Foundations of research and practice (pp. 15-26). New York: Guilford.

Bornstein, M. H. (Ed.). (1995). Handbook of parenting (Vols. 1-4). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bredehoff, D. & Hey, R. (1985). An evaluate study of self-esteem: A family affair. Family Relations, 34, 411-417.

Brody, G. H. & Schaefer, D. R. (1982). Contributions of parents and peers to children's Moral socializations. Developmental Review, 2, 31-75.

Burnett, P. C. (1988). Evaluation of Adlerian parenting programs. Individual Psychology, 44, 63-76.

Campion, M. J. (1995). Who's fit to be a parent?. London and New York: Routledge.

Carey, T. A. (1994). Spare the rod and spoil the child: Is this sensible justification for the Use of punishment in child rearing?. The International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect, 18(2), 1005-1010.

Chattin-McNichols, J (1992). The montessori controversy. Albany, NY: Delmar.

Common Bible (Rev. ed.). (1973). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc..

Conroy, E. & Meyer, S. (1994). Strategies for consulting with parents. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 29(1), 60-66.

Cutright, M. (1992). Growing up confident: How to make your child's early years Learning years. New York: Doubleday.

Dangel, R. F. & Polster, R. A. (Eds.). (1984). Parent training: Foundations of research and practice. New York: Guilford.

Dangel, R. F. & Polster, R .A. (1984). Behavioral parent training: Where it came from and where it's at. In R. F. Dangel & R. A. Polster (Eds.), Parent Training: Foundations of research and practice (pp. 1-12). New York: Guilford.

Dangel, R. F. & Polster, R. A. (1984). WINNING! A systematic, empirical Approach to parent training. In R. F. Dangel & R. A. Polster (Eds.), Parent training: Foundations of research and practice (pp. 162-201). New York: Guilford.

Dembo, M. H., Sweitzer, M. & Lauritzen, P. (1985). An evaluation of group parent Education: Behavioral, PET, and adlerian programs. Review of Educational Research, 55(2), 155-200.

Dinkmeyer, D. & McKay, G. D. (1976). Parent's handbook: A part of the complete Program systematic training for effective parenting. Circle Pines, MN: American

Guidance Service.

Fagot, B. I. (1995). Parenting boys and girls. In M. H. Bornstein (Vol. Ed.). Handbook of parenting: Vol.1. Children and parenting (pp.163-183). Mahwak, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fine, M.J. (Ed.). (1980). Handbook of parent education. New York: Academic.

Fine, M. J. (1980). The parent education movement: An introduction. In M. J. Fine (Ed.). Handbook of parent education (pp. 293-316). New York: Academic.

Ford, D. L. & Lerner, R. M. (1992). Developmental systems theory: An integrative approach. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

French, V. (1995). History of parenting. In M. H. Bornstein (Vol. Ed.), Handbook of parenting: Vol. 2: Biology and ecology of parenting (pp.263-284). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gladding, S. T. (1995). Group work: A counseling specialty (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gordon, T. (1980). Parent effectiveness training: A preventive program and Its effects on families. In M. J. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on parent education (pp. 101-121). New York: Academic.

Hansen, J.C., Stevic, R. R. & Warner, R. W. (1972). Counseling: Theory and process. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Hewlett, S. A. (1991). When the bough breaks: The cost of neglecting our children. New York: HarperPerennial.

Hopkins, B. L. (1984). The data-based development of parent training programs. In R. F. Dangel & R. A. Polster (Eds.), Parent training: Foundation of research and practice

(pp.27-33). New York: Guilford.

Ilg, F. L. & Ames, L. B. (1955). The Gesell institute's child behavior. New York: Dell.

Jasper, F. (1991). The relationship sound-image. International Journal of Instructional Media, 18(2), 161-174.

Karpowitz, D. H. (1980). A conceptualization of the american family. In M. J. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on parent education (pp.27-50). New York: Academic.

Katz, D. (1992). Home fires: An intimate portrait of one middle-class family in postwar America. New York: HarperCollins.

Lerner, J. W. (1997). Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis, and teaching strategies. (7th ed.) New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Levant, R. F. (1986). An overview of psychoeducational family programs. In R. F. Levant (Ed.), Psychoeducational approaches to family therapy and counseling (pp. 1-51). New York: Springer.

Lowenthal. B. Landerholm, E., & Augustyn, K. (1994). Three aspects of early childhood special education assessment: Family interviews, learning styles, and parent-child interactions. Early Child Development and Care, 99, 113-122.

McInnis-Dittrich, K. (1996). Violence prevention: An ecological adaptation of systematic training for effective parenting. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 77(7), 414-421.

McWhirter, J. J. (1980). Working with parents of learning disabled children. In R. R. Abidin (Ed.), Parents education and intervention handbook, (pp.225-251). Springfield, ILL: Charles C. Thomas.

Popkin, M. H., Youngs, B. B., & Healy, J. M. (1995). Parents on board: Building academic success through parent involvement. Atlanta, GA:Active Parenting Publishers.

Prakasam, A. G. (1966). What you should know about your child. Adyar, Madias 20, India: Kalaksheta.

Roberts, T. W. (1994). A systems perspective of parenting: The individual, the family, And the social network. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Rudestam, K. E. (1982). Experimental groups in theory and practice. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Satir, V. (1975). A simulated family interview. In V. Satir, J. Stachowiak, & H. A. Taschman (Eds.), Helping families to change (pp. 163-218). New York: Jason Aronson.

Simpson, R. L. (1980). Behavior modification and child management. In M. J. Fine (Ed.). Handbook on parent education (pp.153-178). New York: Academic.

Smith, P. K. & Cowie, H. (1991). Understanding children's development (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Spoth, R. and Bedman, C. (1995). Parent motivation to enroll in parenting skill programs: A model of family context and health belief predictions. Journal of Family Psychology, 9(3), 294-310.

Swift, K. T. (1995). An outrage to common decency: Historical perspectives on child neglect. Child Welfare, 74(1), 71-91.

Verderber, R. F. & Verderber, K. S. (1983). Inter-act using interpersonal communication skills. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Wagonseller, B. R. & McDowell, R. L. (1979). You and your child: A common sense approach to successful parenting. Champaign, IL: Research.

Wyckoff, J. L. (1980). Parent education programs: Ready, set, go!. In M. J. Fine (Ed.), Handbook of parent education (pp. 293-316). New York: Academic.

Yalom, I. D. (1970). The theory and practice of group psychotherapy. New York: Basic Books.

Paper #2

An Illustrative Example of Criteria Based

Assessment of Two Parenting Programs:

Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Variety of Parent Training Programs 3

Criteria 6

Parents on Board 7

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting 10

An Assessment and Comparison of Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting 13
- Discipline 13
- Communication 15
- Cognitive Stimulation 16
- An Emphasis on the Importance of "Self" 18
- Developmental Stages 19
- Instruction 20
- Training of Facilitators 21
- Program Adaptability 22
- Support for Independent Efforts 23
- Support Groups 25
- Duration, Cost, and Accessibility 26

Conclusion 28

Appendix A (Parents on Board - Exercise Activity) 29

References 30

Introduction

The number of commercially developed parent training programs has increased over the last thirty years (Fine, 1980). In general, the content of most programs is broad in nature and can be used in a variety of settings with diverse populations (Bijou, 1984). The author feels that such widespread function of these programs has made it increasingly difficult for school counsellors to select a program which meets both their needs and those of the participating parents. Because school counsellors may lack the background needed to make judgements as to which program best fits their needs, it was deemed appropriate to offer some foundation information on parenting training and to offer selected criteria that might be used when selecting a program. In Paper One of this paper folio, entitled "The Context and Evolution of Parenting Skills and Parent Training Programs: The Need for Criteria to Assess Parent Training Programs", the author provided such background information and a set of criteria which school counsellors may use to select the parent training program they would use.

In this, the second paper in the folio, the author will briefly review five of the more widely used and better known parenting programs that are currently available. The author will then demonstrate how to apply criteria identified in Paper One in a more detailed assessment of two of these five programs. The author has decided to offer a detailed review of Parents on Board (POB) (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) because there are some notable differences between each program in terms of the depth and breadth of the information presented and some of the skills taught. POB is geared specifically to the school setting, where as STEP is a program that can be used in a variety of settings including the school system. They also differ in instructional

formats, in the content covered and in the duration and cost. Based on the previously offered criteria, the author will present an opinion as to which program might be more beneficial to school counsellors.

Before assessing any parenting program, school counsellors should be aware of the many choices that are available to them. Described below are five programs selected by the author after an extensive review of the literature. It was noted that these were widely adopted programs frequently referred to in the literature. The author will describe and briefly critique these five programs.

Variety of Parent Training Programs

Table 1 summarizes the basic features of five currently available parent training programs. Each program is described in terms of its target audience, objectives, duration and cost and the setting where the program can be carried out.

Nobody's Perfect (Ritch, 1988) is both a physical and a mental health promotion program for parents of children from birth to age five. It was designed for parents who are young, single, low-income, socially and geographically isolated or who have limited education. Parents are educated regarding their children's health, safety, development and behaviour through the use of group discussions and one-on-one counselling. The program encourages participants to be confident in their ability to be good parents. The author of this paper feels that this type of program, although geared to a specific population, could be one of the programs successfully offered by school counsellors. It could act as a prevention program to help ensure that incoming children to the school system are starting off on the right foot.

The second program, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) emphasizes a step by step approach to dealing with the behaviours and misbehaviours of children. Information pertaining to effective communication, discipline, and normal child development is presented using a wide array of instructional formats, including audiotapes, group discussions, charts, and group leader instruction. The program is intended to help parents build confidence and eliminate faulty assumptions, and to allow them to identify the assets they already possess as good parents. The author of this paper feels that this broad program also may be successfully implemented in the school setting by a counsellor. The components of the program are designed so that they can help parents with their child rearing on a day to day basis.

The third program, The Art of Parenting (Wagonseller, Burnett, Salzberg, & Burnett, 1977) was developed on the premise that if parents understand their children's behaviour patterns, they may be able to devise techniques and methods to handle any problems that arise. This program is intended to be used with parents preparing for adoption and with foster parents. It may be restricted in its application in that the number of parents who would fall into this category is limited.

The fourth program school counsellors may consider is Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1970). This program proposes to help enhance parent skills by using honesty as the best policy, building confidence in both communication and confronting skills, encouraging parental authority and influencing children's moral and value development. This program is broad in nature and could be implemented by the school counsellor in the school setting.

The final program to be discussed is Parents on Board (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995).

Table 1

Parent Training Programs	Description
Nobody's Perfect (Ritch, 1988)	Target Parents: Young, low-income, socially and geographically isolated and limited education, with children between 0-5 years. Objectives: Children's health, safety, development, and behaviour. It seeks to build confidence in a parent's ability to be a good parent. Desired organization to hold the program: Health Care System Length: 5-7, 1.5-2 hour sessions and 5-7, one on one counselling sessions Cost to Parents: $0
Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976)	Target Parents: Broad Range Objectives: Understanding the purpose of children's behaviour. Uses reinforcement, discipline, and communication to improve behaviour. Desired organization to hold the program: Broad Range Length: 9, 1.5 hour sessions Cost to Parents: $10 per workbook
The Art of Parenting (Wagonseller, Burnett, Salzberg, & Burnett, 1977)	Target Parents: Foster parents and individuals preparing for adoption of children of various ages Objectives: Improved communication, assertiveness, behaviour management, discipline and motivation skills Desired Organization to hold the program: Broad Range Length: 5, 1 hour sessions Cost to Parents: $0
Parent Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1970)	Target Parents: Broad Range Objectives: Improve skills in communication, consistency, confronting, parental authority and understanding feelings. Desired organization to hold the program: Broad Range Length: 24 hours - 8 sessions Cost to Parents: $35-65 for workbook and sessions
Parents on Board (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995)	Target Parents: Parents of children ages 4-14 Objectives: Communication and discipline skills. The home and the school working as team to help children. Desired setting to hold the program: School Length: 3 hours - 2 sessions Cost to Parents: $20.00 per work book

This program was developed on the premise that the home and school work as a team for the betterment of students. This program emphasizes the importance of encouragement as a form of discipline, and the premise that this, in turn, could help build self-confidence in children. It also

provides parents with information on how to interact with children's teachers and on how to provide help in academic areas. It is felt by the author that this program is geared specifically to the school setting and is useful for school counsellors. It is deemed to be of limited use in other settings.

These programs have commonalities, one of which is some similar content covered. A closer look at each indicates noticeable differences including the cost, duration and the target population. School counsellors must independently assess programs to determine their potential effectiveness and appropriateness. The next section of this paper will briefly discuss the criteria generated in Paper One that will enable school counsellors to assess these programs. A more in-depth discussion of these criteria and their justification for their inclusion can be found in Paper One of this folio.

Criteria

Effective training programs may include a variety of differing components (McInnis-Dittrich, 1996; Bornstein, 1995; Campion, 1995; Spoth & Bedman, 1995; Polster & Dangel, 1984; Fine, 1980). Of the criteria generated in Paper One, the author feels that the following are the most crucial in the assessment of parent training programs. For a program to be effective, it should inform parents of the developmental stages through which children pass and it should help them to develop and implement effective skills that may enable them to more effectively communicate, discipline, and cognitively stimulate their children. To aid parents in enhancing their skills in these areas, programs should first offer support to improve parent self-image and thereby help their children do the same. These critical elements can be presented to parents by

leaders who have some expertise in these areas, through the use of effective instructional formats, encouragement of independent study by parents and support groups. A parenting program also should be adaptable and easily accessed by parents, without duration and cost being seen as a hindrance.

The aforementioned criteria are used below to assess two of the five programs listed in Table 1. Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting were chosen for this demonstration. A detailed description of Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting is also offered below.

Parents on Board

Parents on Board (1995) was developed by Michael H. Popkin, Bettie B. Youngs, and Jane M. Healy. The cost of this program is approximately $470.00 and includes the following materials:

- Leader's Guide
- Two video tapes: Tape 1-Preview Presentation and Tape 2-The Workshop (Sessions 1, 2, & 3).
- Helping Your Child Success in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds
- Completion Certificate
- 2 Posters
- 24 Brochures
- Sample Parent Letter
- Parent's Booklet: Parent Involvement Tips for Helping Your Child Succeed in School

The program is based on the premise that the active involvement by parents in their children's education will enhance the chance that these children will reach their full potential. The program identifies three potential advantages of parental involvement which are manifested in the school setting. Children whose parents are involved are predicted to benefit academically, socially, and behaviourally. The school itself benefits from increased teacher morale, an improved school reputation in the community and increased teacher praise from parents. Parents also can benefit because they gain information and skills helpful in fostering the overall development of their children.

Parents on Board was designed for small groups of ten to twenty-five parents with children ages four to fourteen where sessions last approximately three hours. The program's manual suggests that the leader use a wide array of instructional methods including role-playing, modeling, videos, charts, short lectures and group discussions. Through these instructional formats the program proposes that parents may develop skills and acquire knowledge to understand;

- how their involvement is so important to the overall development of their children.
- how individual learning styles and structured "school smart" homes help their children develop.
- how the home environment has a significant impact on the school environment.
- how they can help and be role models so that their children reach their full academic potential.

The Leader's Guide recommends that during the initial session, the leader welcome participants and share personal information regarding their occupation, educational background,

experience and family history. Participants are then instructed to engage in conversation with another group member relaying their name, their children's names and ages, and what they hope to learn from the workshop. This is a starting point from which group members can get to know each other and build group cohesiveness.

Parents are informed of the following ground rules which are written on chart paper and are in full view for the duration of the program.

- ❑ Be forgiving of yourself.
- ❑ Be encouraging to each other.
- ❑ Show respect for others' opinions and stories.
- ❑ Speak as often as you like, but keep your comments brief.
- ❑ What is shared in this group stays in this group. (Stress confidentiality)
- ❑ You have a right to pass (No one should ever think they have to share.)

Once the participants have been introduced and the ground rules established, instruction begins. The program adheres to the following format;

- ❑ the leader relays information to parents on various topics including learning styles, discipline, helping with homework and consequences for action.
- ❑ the leader's instruction is reinforced through two video vignettes, each lasting approximately three to four minutes. The first video depicts the negative aspect of the presented topic. This is followed by parent discussion. Parents are then shown a second video which depicts more appropriate actions. Parents are also given a chance to comment on the second video.
- ❑ the video vignettes and the information presented by the leader are reinforced further

through the use of role play and homework exercises from the parent text Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of four to 14 Year Olds.

- the format of the program is conducted in the same manner as each new topic is introduced.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay developed Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (1976). The cost of this program is approximately $500.00 and includes the following materials:

- Leader's Manual
- Parent's Handbook
- Twenty-Five Invitational Brochures
- Five Cassettes
- Six Discussion Guide Cards
- Nine Posters
- Ten Charts

This Adlerian-based parenting program is based on the premise that when children suffer the consequences of their behaviour they can learn to act responsibly (Roberts, 1994). The program is intended to be used with a group of ten to twelve parents for nine, two-hour sessions. The information is presented to parents using a wide array of instructional techniques including a text, audio cassettes, pictures, charts and lectures. The program content emphasizes a sequential systematic approach to child rearing, meaning that parents use a step by step outline

in the program to address the behaviours of children. The knowledge and skills parents may acquire from partaking of this program include;

- learning to understand the reasons behind their children's behaviour and misbehaviour.
- learning how to avoid reinforcing misbehaviours.
- learning how to avoid letting their children use emotions to gain attention, power, and revenge.
- learning the difference between the "good" parent and the "responsible" parent.
- learning how to develop and improve their skills in effective communication, encouragement, use of "I-messages", disciplinary techniques, and how to conduct family meetings.

This program also emphasizes the need for parents to build confidence, eliminate faulty assumptions and become aware of the assets they already possess which enable them to be effective parents.

The leader begins the initial session by welcoming participants, sharing personal information, and stating the objectives of the program. Participants get to know a little about each other when they individually state their names, the names of their children and what they expect to get from the sessions. Participants are then given a chance to test their memory. They are instructed to repeat the names of all members of the group. The author feels that this activity promotes a positive atmosphere. It may bring people together, reduce their anxiety level and fears, allowing individuals to relax and have fun.

Parents are then informed of the discussion guidelines to assist communication between each other. These guidelines are presented on cards and are displayed during each meeting.

- ❑ Stay on the topic.
- ❑ Become involved in the discussion.
- ❑ Share the time.
- ❑ Be patient-take one step at a time.
- ❑ Encourage each other.
- ❑ Be responsible for your own behaviour.

Once the guidelines have been explained and group members have been introduced, instruction begins. The program adheres to a specific format.

- ❑ Prior to each of the nine sessions, participants read a specific topic from the Parent's Handbook. The leader initiates group discussion through the use of one or more questions related to the reading.
- ❑ The leader then uses charts and audio cassette tapes to reinforce the information presented in the Parent's Handbook with the intent to increase further discussion.
- ❑ This process is carried on throughout the program as each new topic is presented.

The description of POB and STEP illustrates both noticeable similarities and differences. Although it can be inferred from the discussion that school counsellors can conduct both programs, the question remains; which would be the most effective? To answer this question, an in-depth criteria assessment of the individual elements of each program is conducted below.

An Assessment and Comparison of Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting

Parents on Board and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting are assessed below based on the generated criteria cited above. The program deemed by the author to be superior is also identified.

Discipline

Parents who have effective disciplinary skills are supportive and encouraging toward their children (Cutright, 1992). They use consistency, natural consequences and communication to reduce misbehaviours with the intent that children will eventually use their self-control to manage their own actions (Wagonseller & McDowell, 1979).

STEP and POB both propose to inform parents in the use of disciplinary skills. The developers of both state that parental use of logical and natural consequences, not punishment, can help children make independent responsible decisions. Parents are taught that children, through their experiences, will learn to recognize that consequences are related to their misbehaviour. Both programs recommend that parents give children choices of consequences or that children be given the opportunity to help set the consequences for their misbehaviours.

POB suggests that parents use a step sequential approach to discipline. First, a parent politely makes a request or a reminder to the child. A child may have their blocks left on the floor and the mother makes a gentle request to the child to pick them up. "It is time to tidy away. Please pick up your blocks and put them in the bucket. " If the child does not respond, firm directions are then given, using fewer words. "Pick up the blocks." If the child continues to ignore requests or reminders, the third step, a logical consequence is imposed. Logical

consequences are those "results that parents or other individuals deliberately provide to teach children what logically follows when they violate family rules or the needs of the situation" (Popkin, Youngs, Healy, 1995, p. 75). A logical consequence for a child not picking up their toys would be to take the toys away for a given period of time. The consequence in this case is related to the action of the child. If the parent had said, "Go to your room", that consequence is not related to picking up the blocks. Throughout this process, parents should use encouragement and supportive comments, avoiding discouraging remarks.

A step by step action plan is not offered in STEP. It emphasizes consistency, encouragement, firmness and at the same time kindness. Parents must be firm and keep the wishes of children in mind. For example, if parents are shopping with children who are misbehaving, parents should ask themselves is it because the children does not want to be there. Parents should ask children what it is they want and if it is possible, grant them their wishes. They should also remember that the timing of setting logical consequences is important. If parents set logical consequences when they are very upset, it usually transpires into punishment for children. Unless children have placed themselves in danger, parents should delay their reaction until they can approach the situation calmly. The authors of the STEP program suggest that children's misbehaviour is not an attack of parental authority, but a learning experience for all.

These two programs share somewhat similar ideologies as they pertain to discipline. The author feels however, that STEP offers parents greater insight into both how and why children act the way they do. This important information helps parents identify both the children's behaviours and the reasons behind these actions. It also provides parents with an opportunity to

learn skills to reduce inappropriate behaviours using effective strategies (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976).

Communication

The literature states that the parent/child relationship is significantly improved through more open communication (Roberts, 1994). Communication is a two-way street that involves a sender and receiver of messages. Communication involves what is said, how it is said, the body language used, and also the receiver's interpretation. Because parent education approaches have been shown to influence parent/child communication (Bredehoff & Hey, 1985), the author feels that this topic should be an essential ingredient in parenting programs. The use of such skills is critical in child rearing because they are interrelated with the parents' ability to discipline, to provide cognitive stimulation, and to improve positive self images (Verderber & Verderber, 1983).

POB places some emphasis on how to effectively communicate with children, although this information is implicit rather than explicit. The program is divided into sections based on a primary theme, with communication as one of the many secondary foci. For example, in the theme "Structure", a vignette is used to show how a school smart home is structured and that structure within a household can be improved through effective communication during family meetings. However, the author feels that this program is lacking in the depth of information offered to parents pertaining to the development and application of effective communication skills.

The author feels that STEP places a major focus on this area. This program provides

parents with information on how to improve skills in both receiving and sending messages. One of the ideas introduced is reflective listening. This technique encourages parents to listen in order to respond to children and thereby indicate that they hear what their children mean and feel. Parents are encouraged to have their children express their concerns without fear of rejection. This technique also permits children to consider a problem more rationally, coming up with possible solutions. Through communicating both parents and children can explore alternatives to behaviours or actions, identify who owns a problem, and letting each know how the other feels. The program proposes that the aim of effective communication is to develop mutual respect. Compared with POB, this program offers greater depth and breadth of information to help parents increase their ability to communication with their children.

Cognitive Stimulation

The abilities of children vary, but those who are cognitively stimulated are more likely to reach their full potential (Lerner, 1997). Parents are their children's first teachers and thus play a significant role in their overall development. They can provide cognitive stimulation through the expression of love, encouragement and respect (Bradley, 1995). It can be further enhanced through the interaction with other individuals, toys, literature, music, and storytelling. Parents who provide cognitive stimulation through the various avenues outlined above develop in their children the ability to monitor and elaborate on their capacity to learn and think, to be motivated to expand their knowledge base and to reach their full potential. If parents provide little cognitive stimulation through the use storytelling or through the use of educational toys and are constantly ridiculed, instead of being praised, they will not to want to expand their knowledge

base or investigate new findings. Constant negative reinforcement and punishment will further reduce the chances that children will fully develop cognitively. Children must be encouraged, praised and provided with opportunities to encounter new ideas and participate in active learning. These are building blocks by which they will develop their interest in and their style of learning in future years.

Parents on Board provides useful information which may assist parents in the cognitive stimulation of their children in academic areas. Parents are given specific strategies to help their children in spelling, math, writing, and science. It is impossible to include strategies for all the difficulties children may encounter. Therefore, the program also urges parents to act as coaches; being available, providing support, encouraging the enjoyment of learning and setting realistic expectations. To further help their children, the developers of this program have also included information on individual learning styles. Learning styles are those modalities through which people learn the best (Lerner, 1997) and include the visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic. Parents are informed of these various styles and encouraged to identify their own and those of their children. The goal is that parents will use the children's learning styles to help them and not impose their own.

Unlike this program, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting places little if any emphasis on cognitive stimulation. It does offer parents information on how to communicate with and encourage their children, but further insight into providing their children with academic help or interactive play is not offered. The author feels that omitting such an element weakens the effectiveness of this program.

An Emphasis on the Importance of "Self"

The "self" is continually evolving and is developed by the perceptions we have of ourselves and how others view us in terms of our appearance, our physical and mental capabilities and our vocational potential (Verderber & Verderber, 1983). Parents are role models and through their interactions with children they can be influential in how the "self-concept" of their children develops (Medinnus & Johnson, 1969). Therefore, the first step in any parent training program should be to help parents develop a positive "self" that will, in turn, allow them to help their children do the same (Abidin & Carter, 1980).

The author feels that both parent training programs being reviewed can help parents develop a positive sense of "self". Although this goal may be partially attained through the skills being taught and learned by parents, the program's overall format may have a greater impact. The author feels that ground rules established during the initial sessions pertaining to group discussions, encouragement and the supply of both positive support and feedback help parents develop a typically improved picture of themselves. This in turn may allow them to serve as more positive role models and thereby to help improve the self-images of their children.

Parents who serve as positive role models implement effective discipline and communication techniques, and offer cognitive stimulation are likely to be more proficient in their child rearing. The author feels that the four preceding elements of a quality parent training program, although dealt with independently, are very much interrelated.

Developmental Stages

Piaget (Chattin-McNichols, 1992), Montessori (Prakasam,1966), and Gesell (Ilg & Ames, 1955) have varied explanations for the specific reasons for stages and varying views as to the ages at which children go through them. However, they all recognize the importance that parents should have an understanding of the developmental stages through which children pass. Parental interaction in terms of communication, discipline and cognitive stimulation may vary depending on the age of their children (Wagonseller & McDowell, 1979; Ilg & Ames, 1955).

Both programs offer parents a limited amount of information pertaining to this element. POB does not mention specifically that children pass through stages, but it does give parents coaching tips on how to help their children in certain academic areas during specific grades. For example, this program offers tips for parents to help improve the chances that their children will be successful readers. Parents are informed that they should read aloud to their children at an early age and use tapes to go along with books to encourage talking and listening. For elementary students and those younger, parents may have to pay close attention to homework. It may be necessary to sit and provide assistance. As they get older, parents should monitor their children to ensure that homework is completed. This indicates to children that you are still interested in what they are doing and at the same time providing them with the opportunity to become more independent.

On the other hand, STEP does indirectly suggest that children do go through stages. The program identifies "The terrible two's!", "All five-year-olds do that!" and "They will grow out of it!". However, this should not be a reason to accept inappropriate behaviour. If you accept misbehaviours because of ages or stages, parents are establishing a pattern of behaviour that may

be difficult to alter.

The author feels that both programs do little justice to the importance of this component and such avoidance has an impact not only on the effectiveness of the four preceding components, but the overall program. It is the author's view that these two programs would be strengthened with the addition of information pertaining to developmental stages.

The assessment of these two parent training programs up to this point have been based on the content and skills they propose to offer parents. Although these elements are critical to a comprehensive parenting program, the efforts may be relatively ineffective if the presentation format is unpopular.

Instruction

Parent training programs should offer a variety of instructional formats that may include videos, charts, group discussions, role-play, modeling or lectures. Those that vary widely in their presentation and allow parents to participate are most productive (Wyckoff, 1980).

Parents who attend POB sessions acquire information through a variety of formats. Although the developers profess that it is a "video-based learning system", group discussions, modeling, role-playing, lectures, parent text, and charts are also used. The content delivered through these mediums is short and concise. The program follows a pattern in which in each session the leader first introduces a topic, which is followed by two videos. The first video shown depicts a negative scenario preceded by group discussion. The second video portrays a positive scenario likewise followed by group discussion. The leader also uses scripted role-plays, charts, and the parent text to reinforce the intended content.

STEP offers many of the instructional formats found in the preceding program, including group discussion, parent text, audiotapes, exercises and lectures. The program follows a patterned format in which parents come to sessions already having read the information to be discussed. The leaders have a choice of initiating a group discussion or listening to tapes of scenarios pertaining to the information. The chosen activity is then followed by exercises and discussions. The author feels that the style of instructional formats used to relay information to parents is lengthy and redundant and may negatively influence the effectiveness of the program. Parents independently read specific information relating to each topic, listen to four or five examples on audiotape and do exercises.

Both programs offer a wide array of instructional techniques. The author feels that formats implemented in presenting POB meet the individual learning styles of the general population. The program is concise and to the point. POB fills this requirement. The STEP program discussed in this paper may be considered out of date, does not meet individuals' learning styles, and is somewhat redundant, thus increasing the overall length of the program.

Training of Facilitators

The leader is an important variable in the parent training program (Dembo, Sweitzer, & Lauritzen, 1985). Individuals offering these programs should have training and experiences pertaining to children and their development (Bernal, 1984). School counsellors for the most part have background knowledge pertaining to child development, along with the desire to help others (Gladding, 1995). Neither program requires that leaders be trained before offering the sessions.

The developers of POB suggest that a professional with academic experience, good facilitation skills, an encouraging attitude and a desire to help parents with their children may conduct the program. STEP is more lenient, stating that a professional would be preferred, but that the leader's guide serves as the authority. An individual with the ability to read the program's manual, start each session and facilitate group discussions could conduct the program.

Although these programs proclaim that training need not be a prerequisite, the author feels that individuals conducting these programs should have some expertise in this area. A leader can read from a book, just as the developers of STEP suggest, but during discussions and questioning, they should be able to give professional advice or know where they can seek it out. The potential impact of a program may be lost by the actions of the leader.

Experienced and skilled professionals with a background in working with children and parents would be preferred leaders and would enhance the quality of a parent training program. Their knowledge and experience could be of further importance in providing them with the ability to adapt or modify the program to better meet the needs of their parents.

Program Adaptability

Most parent training programs are not geared to specific settings, but are broad in nature (Bijou, 1984). School counsellors may need to adapt a program through additions or exclusions in order to meet the needs of their parents.

POB is geared specifically for schools. To use this program within another setting would require a great deal of modifying. The author feels that such alterations would be time consuming and would affect the overall effectiveness of this program. However, the program

itself allows the leader to make modifications. The leader has the option of leaving out components without affecting the program's flow when these do not pertain to the participants. To introduce information or skills into the program would not be troublesome, however, it would be difficult to maintain the flow of the program without the videos.

STEP is a program that could be used in a variety of settings. The information contained in the program can be adapted and modified to meet the needs of parents. The author feels that it would take little effort on the part of the leader to introduce new material or eliminate existing material. Such changes would not interfere with the program's flow.

While both programs allow modifications, they are not equally adaptable. POB is restricted in its use to the school setting, whereas STEP could be termed a universal program. This program could be used in a variety of settings depending on the need including the school, a day care center, group homes for young mothers, or a church setting. For school counsellors, the choice of a program based on this element will be determined by the needs of the participating population.

Support for Independent Efforts

Independent effort or the work that parents do outside the group is an essential element of parent training programs (Fine, 1980). The efforts by parents may include reading assigned materials, completing written assignments or experimenting with skills acquired through the sessions.

Those individuals participating in POB are encouraged to purchase the parent text Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds. This book

provides parents with an excellent source of reading to reinforce the information presented to the parents during the sessions. It also provides parents with exercises they must complete at home. Some of these exercises (see Appendix A) provide parents with insight into the physical needs of their children and whether the parent is providing them, the structure of the family's home life and if it is conducive to learning, and being aware of the logical consequences, if any they set for their children.

Those individuals participating in STEP are also encouraged to purchase the Parent's Handbook. This text prepares group members for the upcoming meeting. They must read information about the topic to be covered so that they can begin discussion with group members. The STEP leader must also have each member state an activity that they must try at home and discuss with group members at the next meeting.

Both programs being reviewed encourage the use of independent study. Parents are encouraged to implement the skills discussed in the session in their day to day child rearing practices and to return to the next sessions to obtain further advice and suggestions. Parents may gain further insight into the content presented during the sessions through reading and completing the exercises in the program texts. The support offered for independent study by both programs is well developed and both programs provide parents with the opportunity to carry out activities in real life and to gain reinforcement and feedback from the group (Gladding, 1995).

Support Groups

Some parents, who have difficulty with their children, feel as if they are alone in the situations they experience. They may have no one to turn to or not know where to turn to seek assistance. Parent training programs can be lifesavers for some parents, not only through the information they provide, but also through the interaction with other parents. Support groups can offer hope, information, interpersonal learning and cohesiveness (Yalom, 1970) which may be the key to parents' learning of new skills and attitudes.

POB and STEP allow group support to flourish. The author feels that the rules stated during the initial sessions are significant in meeting this goal. The ground rules of using encouragement, respect for each other, and confidentiality allow the parents in the program to trust each other, gain positive feedback from the group and eliminate their fears of being alone.

Individual parent written and action exercises to be carried out at home also allow for group support. In the STEP program, parents must have a mind set of an exercise that they will engage in at home and this is relayed to parents. Upon their return to the group, parents will receive feedback from the group members. Their support and their analysis of what has taken place will encourage parents to continue and to improve. The same can hold true for POB. Parents can improve the exercises they engage in at home from positive group feedback and from the contribution of new ideas.

Duration, Cost, and Accessibility

"Parents today have less time, energy and other resources for them to parent effectively" (Roberts, 1994, p.74). These factors may also impede their willingness to attend a parent

training program. Therefore, it is important for school counsellors to offer a program that is reasonable in both the cost and the duration and is easily accessible.

STEP and POB allow flexible delivery, good accessibility to parents and reasonable cost. These programs can be offered in almost any setting including a school classroom or school counsellors' office. The cost of both programs may deter the attendance of some parents, especially those individuals who could benefit from such programs but have limited finances (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1995). School counsellors with a little initiative and forethought, may be able to reduce the cost. Both programs require parents to borrow, rent, or buy the text required. Schools could purchase a set for parents or perhaps parents who have previously taken the course can pass on or sell their books.

The cost in addition to the text and accessibility of these programs are or could be very flexible. The two programs differ in the number and length of the sessions that are offered. POB is a three-hour program that can be conducted over one, two or even three sessions. STEP recommends nine, one and half hour sessions. If parents require babysitters to look after their children, both programs, especially STEP could become very expensive. Parents may also find it difficult to attend all sessions to such a lengthy program like STEP due to other obligations. The duration of the STEP program may deter some parents from attending. The author has previously stated that some aspects of this program are redundant and that the information could be presented in a shorter time frame. POB on the other hand is shorter and covers a wide array of parenting concerns. The author realizes parenting skills cannot be taught within a given time frame. The goal is to draw parents to skills training programs, one in which they have time to attend. The author feels that POB better meets this criterion.

The overall criteria assessment of POB and STEP, as offered by the author indicates that both programs have their strengths and weaknesses. Table 2 offers a summary of this information.

Both programs place emphasis on the elements of discipline, on the importance of "self", supplying support for independent efforts, and on involvement in a support group. They do not place importance on the developmental stages children pass through, the training of facilitators and the accrued cost to parents.

School counsellors who may find themselves having to decide between these two programs must look beyond these strengths and weaknesses. A further look at these programs indicates that STEP is weak in its emphasis placed on cognitive development. The instructional materials it includes may not meet a range of learning styles and the program is lengthy. POB is weak in that it does not focus on effective communication skills. It may also be too brief to result in any significant change.

The author's assessment of both programs indicates that they fall short in terms of some of the criteria set out. Based solely on the criteria, the author would have to select POB as the program of choice. This program unlike STEP is geared specifically for the school setting. The program is based on up to date technology and takes into consideration the learning styles of parents. It is also conducted over a relatively short time span and hence is more convenient. Although it is weak in the area of communication, the ability to modify the program allows school counsellors to add outside information to cover this area.

TABLE 2

CRITERIA	*STEP	*POB
Discipline	S	S
Communication	W	S
Cognitive Stimulation	S	W
An Emphasis on the Importance of "Self"	S	S
Developmental Stages	W	W
Instruction Format	S	S
Training Facilitators	W	W
Program Adaptability	W	W
Supports for Independent Efforts	S	S
Support Groups	S	S
Duration of the Program	S	W
Cost to Parents	W	W
Accessibility to Parents	S	S

***STEP: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting**
***POB: Parents on Board**
*** W: Weakness**
*** S: Strength**

Conclusion

This paper provides school counsellors with a criteria based assessment and comparison of training programs. It also suggests which is the more effective program for usage linked to a school setting. School counsellors must be cognizant of the fact that to select a program based solely on these criteria would be unwise. In order to choose the most appropriate parenting program, school counsellors must also keep in mind the needs of both the parents and the school (Abidin & Carter, 1980). There is virtually no research on the actual impact of these programs on the change of children's behaviour or the quality of child care they receive. Counsellors thus must use their professional judgement, experience and sensitivity in the needs of both the children in the school and the demands presented by the parents when making a choice.

Appendix A (Parents on Board - Exercise Activity)

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES GUIDE SHEET

Think about an ongoing problem that you are having with one of your children, a problem that has not improved with polite requests or firm directions.

What is the problem? _____

What would you like your child to do? _____

_____

_____

List two or three logical consequences that might be effective in influencing him to change his behaviour:
For example: ***Either*** *ride your bike in the driveway* ***or*** *come in the house to play.*

For example: ***When*** *you have completed your homework,* ***then*** *you may play on the computer.*

Either _____ or _____

Either _____ or _____

When _____ then _____

When _____ then _____

Choose the logical consequence that you think will work best, then meet with your child to discuss the problem. If she is unable to come up with a logical consequence that you can live with, use the one you have just developed.

Be sure to encourage your child's positive behaviour.

References

Abidin, R. R. & Carter, B. D. (1980). Workshops and parent groups. In R. R. Abidin (Ed.), Parent education and intervention handbook (pp. 107-129). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Bernal, M. E. (1984). Consumer issues in parent training. In R. F. Dangel & R. A. Polster (Eds.), Parent training: Foundations of research and practice (pp. 477-503). New York: Guilford.

Bijou, S. W. (1984). Parent training: Actualizing the critical conditions of early childhood development. In R. F. Dangel & R. A. Polster (Eds.), Parent training: Foundations of research and practice (pp. 15-26). New York: Guilford.

Bornstein, M. H. (Ed.). (1995). Handbook of parenting (Vols. 1-4). Mahwak, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bradley, R. H. (1995). Environment and parenting. In M. H. Bornstein (Vol. Ed.), Handbook of parenting: Vol. 2: Biology and ecology of parenting (pp. 235-261). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bredehoff, D. & Hey, R. (1985). An evaluate study of self-esteem: A family affair. Family Relations, 34, 411-417.

Campion, M. J. (1995). Who's fit to be a parent?. London and New York: Routledge.

Chattin-McNichols, J. (1992). The montessori controversy. Albany, NY: Delmar.

Cutright, M. (1992). Growing up confident: How to make your child's early years Learning years. New York: Doubleday.

Dangel, R. F. & Polster, R. A. (Eds.). (1984). Parent training: Foundations of research and practice. New York: Guilford.

Dembo, M. H., Sweitzer, M. & Lauritzen, P. (1985). An evaluation of group parent Education: Behavioral, PET, and adlerian programs. Review of Educational Research, 55(2), 155-200.

Dinkmeyer, D. & McKay, G. (1976). Systematic training for effective parenting. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance.

Dinkmeyer, D. & McKay, G. (1976). Parent's handbook: A part of the complete Program systematic training for effective parenting. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Fine, M.J. (Ed.). (1980). Handbook of parent education. New York: Academic Press.

Fine, M. J. (1980). The parent education movement: An introduction. In M. J. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on parent education (pp. 3-26). New York: Academic.

Garbarino, J. & Kostelny, K. (1995). Parenting and public policy. In M. H. Bornstein (Vol. Ed.), Handbook of parenting: Vol. 3: Status and social conditions of parenting (pp. 419-436). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gladding, S. T. (1995). Group work: A counseling specialty (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gordon, T. (1970). Parent effectiveness training. New York: Peter H. Wyden.

Ilg, F. L. & Ames, L. B. (1955). The Gesell institute's child behavior. New York: Dell.

Lerner, J. W. (1997). Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis, and teaching strategies. (7th ed.) New York: Houghton Mifflin.

McInnis-Dittrich, K. (1996). Violence prevention: An ecological adaptation of systematic training for effective parenting. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 77(7), 414-421.

Medinnus, G. R. & Johnson, R. C. (1969). Child and adolescent psychology: Behavior and development. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Popkin, M. H., Youngs, B.B., & Healy, J. M. (1995). Helping your child succeed in school: A guide for parents of 4 to 14 year olds. Atlanta, GA: Active Parenting.

Popkin, M. H., Youngs, B. B., & Healy, J. M. (1995). Parents on board. Atlanta, GA: Active Parenting.

Prakasam, A. G. (1966). What you should know about your child. Adyar, Madias 20, India: Kalaksheta.

Ritch, A. (1988). Nobody's perfect. Health and Welfare Canada.

Roberts, T. W. (1994). A systems perspective of parenting: The individual, the family, and the social network. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Spoth, R. and Bedman, C. (1995). Parent motivation to enroll in parenting skill programs: A model of family context and health belief predictions. Journal of Family Psychology, 9(3), 294-310.

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (1976). Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Verderber, R. F. & Verderber, K. S. (1983). Inter-act using interpersonal communication skills. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Wagonseller, B. R., Burnett, M., Salzberg, B., & Burnett, J. (1977). The art of parenting. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Wagonseller, B. R. & McDowell, R. L. (1979). You and your child: A common sense approach to successful parenting. Champaign, IL: Research.

Wyckoff, J. L. (1980). Parent education programs: Ready, set, go!. In M. J. Fine (Ed.), Handbook of parent education (pp. 293-316). New York: Academic.

Yalom, I. D. (1970). The theory and practice of group psychotherapy. New York: Basic Books.

Paper #3

A School Counsellor's Reflections,

Advice and Suggestions for

Setting Up and Delivering of Parents On Board

Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Parents on Board 3

Reflections and Commentary on the Offered Program 6
School Counsellor's Insight, Tips and Suggestions 8
Author's Insight, Tips and Suggestions 10
Leader's Guide Insight, Tips and Suggestions 14

Contribution to the Field of School Counselling 17

Conclusion 17

Appendix-A Reflective Practice 18

Appendix B-Counsellor's Letter 22

Appendix C-Program Evaluation 23

Appendix D-Checklist 24

References 25

Introduction

As part of a graduate study program in school counselling, the author spent two days per week, for four months in a practicum at a Kindergarten to Grade Six school. During that time, there were opportunities to partake in intervention and prevention programs with students and parents. One unique offering by the author and the school counsellor was a parenting skills program.

The need for a parenting program was identified through a parent and teacher survey. This survey was conducted by the school counsellor because it was felt that it was time to eliminate those programs that no longer addressed the needs of the individuals involved in the school setting and to offer programs pertaining to current issues. One of the needs identified by teachers and parents was parent skills training. It was thus decided that it would be appropriate to undertake a review of the literature and preview possible parenting resources and programs that could be implemented.

While there were many parent training programs to choose from, the better known ones being Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (1976), The Art of Parenting (1977), and Nobody's Perfect (1989). It was decided to offer a less well known program called Parents on Board (POB) (1995). This program was chosen because it is geared specifically for the school setting. Besides offering instruction in both communication and discipline skills, it provides parents with recommendations to help their children in specific academic areas.

This paper provides a detailed description of the parent training program Parents on

Board. It will offer the author's reflections [1] on the set up, delivery, and termination of POB along with information from the literature and integrative comments. Based on her reflective process, the author proposes answers to several questions and problems encountered while delivering the program. Also offered is a discussion on the professional development of the author. It is hoped that by sharing these observations and solutions that other school counsellors will benefit.

Parents on Board

The parent training program POB (1995) was developed by Michael H. Popkin, Bettie B. Youngs, and Jane M. Healy. The cost of this program is approximately $470.00 and includes the following materials:

- Leader's Guide
- Two video tapes: Tape 1-Preview Presentation and Tape 2-The Workshop (Sessions 1, 2, & 3)
- Helping Your Child Success in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds
- Completion Certificate
- 2 Posters
- 24 Brochures
- Sample Parent Letter
- Parent's Booklet: Parent Involvement Tips for Helping Your Child Succeed in School

[1]See Appendix A for a brief commentary on the nature and use of reflection as a tool for counsellors.

POB uses as its foundation Adlerian theory and is based on the premise that when children suffer the consequences of their behaviour they learn to act responsibly (Roberts, 1994). The program is founded on the premise that academic success can be enhanced through parent involvement in the school setting. The program identifies three potential advantages of parental involvement in the school setting. It proposes that children, whose parents are involved in their education benefit academically, attitudinally, and behaviourally. Its authors suggest that parenting improves, the school staff benefits from increased teacher morale, improved school reputation in the community, and increased teacher praise from parents. Parents who profit from school involvement often gain information and develop skills to enhance the overall development of their children. POB encourages the family and the school to work as a unit for the overall benefit of the students.

The program involves workshops designed for small groups of ten to twenty-five participants who typically meet for three, one-hour sessions. The facilitator uses a wide array of instructional methods such as role-playing, modeling, videos, charts, short lectures, and group discussions. Through the various instructional formats, the program's authors state that parents develop improved skills and acquire knowledge in the areas listed below. They claim that parents:

- learn why their involvement is so important in the education of their children;
- acquire knowledge of learning styles and the importance of a structured "school smart" home environment;
- come to understand the significance of the home environment on the school environment;

- learn techniques to encourage and discipline their children; and
- learn how they can become role models more likely to ensure that their children become more successful in their academic subject areas.

The Leader's Guide recommends that at the beginning of the initial session, parents be informed of the ground rules followed throughout the parenting program. These ground rules outlined in the Leader's Guide include:

- to be forgiving of yourself;
- to be encouraging to each other;
- to show respect for other's opinions and stories;
- to speak as often as you like, but keep your comments brief;
- to remember what is shared in this group stays in this group (stress confidentiality); and
- to pass if you do not feel like talking or participating.

The author of this paper feels that such ground rules help build group cohesiveness and reduce parents' fears that personal information regarding their family may be divulged outside the parenting group. Although these rules may be difficult to implement and monitor, the leader and other members of the group can only trust that participants adhere to them.

With the ground rules established, the leader welcomes participants and shares personal information about themselves; occupation, educational background, experience and family history. Participants are then instructed to pair off in groups of two, preferably with someone they do not know to share the following information; their name, their children's names and ages, and what they hope to learn from the workshop. This is a starting point from which members can get to know each other and continue to build group cohesiveness.

Once the participants have been introduced and the ground rules established, instruction begins. The program adheres to the format outlined below.

- The leader relays information to parents on various topics including learning styles, discipline, helping with homework and consequences for actions.
- The leader's instruction is reinforced through the use of two video vignettes, each lasting approximately three to four minutes. The first video depicts the negative aspect of the topic being presented, followed by parent discussion. Parents are then shown a second video which depicts more appropriate parental actions, followed by parent discussion.
- The video vignettes and the information presented by the leader are reinforced further through the use of role play and homework exercises from the parent text Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of four to 14 Year Olds.
- The program is conducted using the same format as each new topic is introduced.

Reflections and Commentary on the Offered Program

The use of the reflective process during the initial set up, delivery and termination of Parents on Board was a first time experience for the author. Although the author had some prior knowledge of reflection, it was limited. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to undertake a literature review of the topic. The literature review revealed that individuals engage in reflection through the use of interpersonal process recall, supervision or journal writing. These three forms of reflection are explained in more detail in Appendix A.

The author adopted journal writing to reflect on the set up, delivery and termination of

POB. This method of reflection was chosen above all others because it permitted the author to review the events of each parenting session on a continual basis, with the hope of coming up with possible solutions to problems that were encountered. The use of journal writing is an individual act and is not limited by the need to wait for the input of others. Finally, journal entries can be used both as a reminder of the positive attributes of the parenting program and a guide to avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

The author's journal writings recounted the events throughout the course of POB. The author described in detail personal observations and the program's positive and negative attributes as relayed by parents and the school counsellor. The author reflected on how the program's negative attributes might be reversed. Probable solutions were generated immediately, others emerged while the author was walking down the street, going to sleep, or poring over the journal entries. The total amount of time engaged in reflecting and journal writing would be difficult to calculate because of the ongoing thinking that took place.

Through the reflective process, the author found that co-leading POB was an eye opening and educational experience as it provided an awareness of the difficulties parents encounter with their children. It also presented an opportunity to put into practice the many skills taught in the graduate counselling program. The author felt that participating in the set up and delivery of this program improved her communicating, counselling, and collaborating skills. However, the author found that during the delivery of this parenting program, unanticipated difficulties were encountered and many questions were unanswered. Questions such as: how could the set up, delivery and termination of this program go smoother; what has been learned by the parents from this experience; what can be done so that more parents will participate; and what can be

done to reduce the cost to parents?

POB was developed and geared specially for parents of average students and for the delivery in a typical school. The program developers did not attempt to address or were unable to foresee all the difficulties that might be encountered during the set up, delivery and termination of this program, hence presenters must anticipate some problems. In the following section, insights, tips, and suggestions for dealing with such difficulties will be offered. This information may help reduce the difficulties encountered by school counsellors especially those counsellors offering this parent training program for the first time.

School Counsellor's Insight, Tips and Suggestions

The school counsellor as co-leader of the program, provided some useful insights, tips and suggestions that were generated through her prior experience. She pointed out that this program was chosen because the content was geared to the target parent population in the school and that it was designed for parents with children age four to fourteen. While the age of the oldest student in this school is lower than the intended target population, the program is felt to be flexible enough to allow certain components to be omitted without affecting the flow of the presentation. It was felt that participating parents could develop early intervention skills that could benefit their children when they entered school. Research has shown that such early intervention can help children reach their full potential (Lerner, 1997).

The organization and the flow of the sessions may influence the potential skills developed. Because of this, the experienced presenter recommended that multiple copies of the Leader's Guide be obtained for each facilitator to help ensure a smooth and productive

presentation. Because the Leader's Guide suggests that facilitators colour code the various activities in the guide, including when to play the video tapes, when to make reference to the chart, and when the co-leaders are to speak, making these items easier to identify during the presentation, marking up the original copy can cause problems. If the original guide is marked on, it will be difficult to make colour code alterations for future presentations or have a clear guide for future use. In addition, providing each leader with a guide, limits unnecessary interruptions and may decrease the delivery time.

The school counsellor and the Leader's Guide both suggest sending home a letter to attract parents to the program. The manual provides a sample. However, the school counsellor felt that the provided letter was very impersonal and did not provide the necessary information. The school counsellor's replacement letter makes reference to the success of the program in previous years and includes a parental intention form that is to be returned to the school (see Appendix B-Counsellor's Letter). In the letter, parents are informed that the program is offered with the understanding that they will attend voluntarily.

In addition to the announcement, the school counsellor felt that it was necessary to approach some parents one on one, suggesting that they attend the sessions. These specific parents were identified with the help of the regular classroom teachers and based on the school counsellor's past experience with some parents. These parents had children who were having academic and social difficulties in school. Parents deemed to potentially benefit but who might find it difficult to pay for the cost of the parent exercise book were also contacted. It is felt that a program offered by the school should not be limited to those who can afford to participate.

There was no cost for attending the sessions. There was a cost associated with

purchasing the exercise book, Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds (Popkin, Youngs, & Healy, 1995). In the author's view, this book appears to be an excellent resource. It provides parents with a resource in which they review and practice information presented in the sessions. To reduce the cost to some parents, the school counsellor offered to lend a copy of the parent manual for the duration of the program. The author recognizes that other possible solutions to this problem could have been implemented. The Parent Teacher Association or the School Council could have purchased the books and rented them out. The recommended exercises could be done on paper, instead of in the actual text book. Parents could also borrow or buy secondhand books from individuals who had attended previous programs.

The issues of reducing the cost and individually inviting parents must be handled delicately. School Counsellors should invite parents in a fashion that encourages them to participate for the betterment of their children, not have them perceive your request as an expression of caring about their parenting style or their children.

Author's Insight, Tips and Suggestions

The positive experience of working with a co-leader cannot be overstated (Abidin & Carter, 1980). However, the author found that it also posed challenges. While co-leading POB, the experienced school counsellor had a tendency to leave out details of the program that she deemed unnecessary. Reflecting back, some of these components may have been essential for the first time leader to execute and experience.

The first time leader would benefit from making inquiries regarding School Board and

school's policies related to offering specific parenting programs. School Boards and schools may differ in their policies, therefore, it would be advisable to find the answers to these questions. Officials at the School Board may also be able to offer suggestions as to which programs other school counsellors have offered in the past and have found to be useful.

The initial step of contacting the School Board was not performed, nor was a preview of the program to parents before the actual delivery process. The Leader's Guide recommends that an outline of the program be presented to parents prior to the first session during a parent assembly, an open house or a 'meet the teacher' night. This outline informs parents of the program's purpose and content. It could help parents determine if the content would be useful to them. During this preview meeting parents could be notified of an exact date of delivery. The addition of knowing the date well in advance can permit parents to adjust their schedules and make the necessary arrangements in order to attend. The preview is an essential ingredient in the success of the program. The author feels that the elimination of this step in the leaders' delivery may have been one reason why parental attendance was low. Uninformed parents may feel that attending the sessions could be admitting that they need help, they are bad parents, or they have naughty kids. The outline does not stigmatize them as either and provides an opportunity for all parents to become informed without feeling singled out. It is possible that they will recognize that such a program is offered to foster the social and academic development of their children, not as an attack on parenting styles.

Because many parents are not well informed, lack of participation may be due to feelings that the information may seem irrelevant or that lengthy sessions are undesirable. The duration of Parents on Board is fairly short with three, one-hour sessions. It provides for those parents

who have a great interest in doing a program, but who are limited by time. However, during the delivery of this program, the author found that the allotted time was insufficient. Toward the end of each session the information was rushed and therefore justice was not done to the content and some of the information lost its effectiveness.

The author suggests that to avoid running out of time, leaders should strictly adhere to the specified times within each subsection as outlined in the manual. This can be accomplished by reminding participants of the ground rules, one of which is to "speak as often as you like, but keep it brief". Another possible solution would be to conduct the program over four sessions instead of the recommended three. A fourth session would allow feedback and reinforcement from the group on the final exercise in the parent text. If the leader follows program protocol, parents are left on their own to implement and to evaluate their success in the final exercises they complete in the parent text. The fourth session would also provide the opportunity for parents to fully complete the program evaluation forms developed by the school counsellor (see Appendix C). The author found that within a strict three-session format, parents were not given enough time to fill out these forms and therefore they left out questions or gave one answer responses.

It is critical for parents to evaluate programs. Information acquired from parents through the use of questionnaires, surveys or evaluation forms help leaders to identify the positive and negative attributes of both the program and the presentation style of the leader. Parents who attended POB felt that the short nature of the lectures, videos and discussions assured the attentiveness of the parents and a smooth flow of the program. They also stated that the length of the program was too short and co-leaders appeared to rush during their presentation. Parents

stated that the break during each session was a positive attribute of the program. It provided parents and leaders with the opportunity to engage in informal talks with other participants and the co-leaders. It was a chance to relax and to have questions answered in private that some parents would not otherwise ask. Parents also found that the parent guide Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds was a very useful tool to reinforce the information presented in the sessions and to be used by parents after the termination of the program.

To ensure that parents reap the full benefits of the intended goals of POB, the author recommends that the earlier the intervention in the school year, the better for both parents and children. The co-leaders offered the program at the end of the school year. Parents had only a few months to practice recommended skills before the end of the school year. There may have been inadequate time, for example to practice those skills pertaining to the area of academics. An earlier start date also may have allowed the opportunity to gain further assistance from the leaders or group members.

The author feels that following the above suggestions, all based on situations developed as a result of field testing the program will increase the likelihood of a more productive delivery. Based on this experience, the author has developed a checklist to keep in mind while planning and delivering the program (see Appendix D). This may help future leaders of this program. The Leader's Guide also provides some insights, tips and suggestions that may be useful especially to the first time conductor.

Leader's Guide Insight, Tips and Suggestions

Within the Leader's Guide, the developers of this program offer ground rules that should be closely adhered to. Some of these include rules on confidentiality and respecting the input and feelings of fellow participants. Participants should not discuss matters pertaining to the group to friends or to the general public. The author feels that these rules are important to the overall development of the group. These additional rules may increase both the trust between group members and the interaction that takes place and improve the overall group cohesiveness (Gladding, 1995). In the field test discussed, the co-leaders revisited the ground rules found within the Leader's Guide at the beginning of each session. At times during the presentation, both the leaders and the parents forgot about these ground rulers due to the excitement and the intensity of discussions. A parent would bring up an incident with a child and other parents would intervene to voice their opinions or suggestions. It might be wise for leaders to make note in their guides to review these rules at specified times throughout the session, thus staying within time limits.

Limiting the number of parents within the group may also help stay within the program's prescribed time. The group size as recommended by the Leader's Guide is ten to twenty-five parents. However, the author feels that the number twenty-five is fairly high. It is suggested that the group size not exceed fifteen parents when the program is delivered by one leader. The difficulty with more than fifteen individuals in a group may result in an extensive amount of discussion. The resultant problem is that the group will run over the intended time. For some parents within the group, this was not a problem. Other parents would intervene during the intended ending time of a session and mention that they would have to get home to relieve their

babysitter.

To ensure dialogue and positive relationships between the participants and the leader from the initial session and beyond, the guide recommends that each person share some personal information with another member of the group. Participants are asked to find someone they do not know and tell them their name, the names and ages of their children and what they hope to learn from this workshop. The author feels that this is an excellent suggestion and although not recommended by the Leader's Guide, further use of such exercises might be beneficial. On other occasions, exercises could be used to reduce anxiety levels, to relax, and to increase group participation. It must be kept in mind that the length of the program may limit the opportunity to use such techniques. If leaders and participants feel that sessions are unproductive, it may be necessary to include such interventions. The program does allow parents to participate in three role-plays. The author found that during the delivery process, those parents who spoke for the first time during these activities continued to converse in sessions that followed. This may provide justification for including interactive exercises throughout the sessions.

Relaxation can also come from breaks. The guide gives the option of breaking at the end of each session or at the end of the program. During the delivery of this program, the co-leaders offered refreshments half way through all three two-hour sessions. This provided parents and leaders the opportunity to get up and move around, to interact with other parents, and to ask questions or express concerns. This intermission may help relax some individuals, create group cohesiveness, and provide the opportunity for group members to speak privately to other members or to group leaders.

The consideration and application of the tips presented in the Leader's Guide cannot be

overemphasized. The author feels that the developers should be commended on these suggestions and on the wide array of instructional materials. Paper One in this folio, "The Context and Evolution of Parenting Skills Training and Parent Training programs: The need for Criteria to Assess Parent Training Programs" points out that an effective program should include a wide array of instructional materials. The videos in this program are very clear and quite modern. They show two to three minute vignettes of what parents should and should not do in specific situations. The parent text includes hands on activities. However, the charts created by the school counsellor may be somewhat cumbersome. The Leader's Guide has a list of information to be placed on long chart paper. The leaders must already contend with starting and stopping the video tapes, and turning pages and making references to charts may interfere with the presentation flow. The author and the Leader's Guide recommend the use of overheads, reducing the need to move and thus decreasing the number of distractions. This technique allows the leader to present a well-polished program, reducing the need to replace torn and tattered paper charts in the future.

The tips and suggestions recommended by the Leader's Guide are useful and can provide for a smooth delivery of the program. However, as previously stated, the program developers did not foresee all difficulties that may be encountered during the set up and delivery process; there inevitably are delivery problems. As leaders and more specifically school counsellors, offer parenting programs, the reflective process can be a useful method to help suggest solutions to program restrictions and to contribute to the field of school counselling.

Contribution to the Field of School Counselling

The information gathered by the author through the reflective process, the literature review and consultation with the co-leader has contributed to the development of many insights related to the delivery of parenting programs by school counsellors. This author hopes that sharing these will be of worth to other school counsellors considering offering similar services.

Conclusion

The author's primary intention in offering her reflections and commentary on the delivery of Parents on Board is to provide school counsellors with insights, concrete tips and suggestions for their own possible future work involving this program. The involvement in the delivery of this program and the reflections thereafter, have hopefully contributed knowledge to the general field of school counselling.

Offering this program and maintaining a reflective diary, have provided the author with the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in personal skills required to conduct this program and to carry out the duties of a school counsellor. These insights will be used by the author to build on her personal strengths.

Appendix-A Reflective Practice

As the use of reflective journal writing is frowned upon and thus is relatively rare in the counselling literature (Irving & Williams, 1995), it was deemed appropriate to include below a brief overview of this practice.

John Dewey first introduced the reflective process. He described it as a behaviour which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads (Grant & Zeichner, 1984). When an individual engages in careful after thought regarding an activity, it may lead to changes in how they approach that same activity or others in the future in order to try and make it more successful. Based on the work of Dewey, other professionals in the field of reflective practice have adapted his position and utilized it to create their own ideas. Others have also designed models and techniques to carry out the process.

The controversies surrounding the definitions and models used by those engaging in the reflective process are due mainly to the differences between those who view reflection from the scientific perspective and those that see it in a social context (Houston & Clift, 1990). Those in the field of Science state that the reflective process can be implemented using a step by step model, which all individuals can follow. Those that look at it from a social stand point say that this is not possible. All individuals do not speculate on a situation in the same way. This second group believes that values and beliefs developed through interaction with society influence the outcome of the reflective process. Researchers of the overall process feel that the differing orientations between these two groups have caused the growth in this area to be undisciplined and in danger of losing its potential for effecting lasting improvement in practice (Copeland,

Brimingham, De Le Cruz & Lewin, 1993).

The controversies surrounding the reflective process parallel those found in the field of school counselling. There are various definitions and theories that can be applied in counselling. The goal of most training programs is to educate counsellors on the vast number of theories that can be applied. This knowledge may provide them with a foundation from which to develop their personal philosophy or theory. The same premise may hold true for those who engage in reflection. Through education, training and continual practice, counsellors may develop their own style of reflection, just as they develop their own styles in theories of counselling.
In spite of the controversy surrounding the use of reflection, it may be beneficial to school counsellors (Stickel & Trimmer, 1994; Canning, 1991). Engaging in reflective practice may increase the breadth and depth of their personal and professional knowledge. This process may help them gain insightful information about themselves and help them recognize their expertise and limitations. This knowledge can encourage and empower them to increase their counselling skills and/or make alternate arrangements to help their clients. The reflective process may allow them to engage in meta-cognitive activities which result in their development and selecting strategies for helping methods for handling problems (Lerner, 1997). Reflective practice may allow them to perceive others and events in a different way.

In order for school counsellors to benefit from the reflective process, they must be actively engaged (Houston & Clift, 1990). It is not a skill that can be acquired just through listening and reading. Early in the process, it may be necessary to use a step by step model. Although this process has been previously criticized in this paper, "it holds promise of helping early learners with difficult and uncertain tasks" (Putman, 1991, p.145).

The step by step model is a thinking process in which problem solving occurs and a possible solution is found (Copeland et al., 1993). The first important step in reflection is to identify the problem. Once the problem has been identified, possible solutions are generated. From this list, a feasible solution is selected and an effort is made to put it into action. Without action, reflection is incomplete. The final stage of the process is to evaluate if the chosen solution has worked. This last step is critical because if the solution is ineffective, another will have to be chosen and tried.

To put these reflective steps into action, school counsellors can use a number of techniques. These include interpersonal process recall (IRI), supervision and journal writing, which can be used independently or in combination (Clarke, 1995).

Interpersonal process recall (IRI) (Houston & Clift, 1990) occurs when an individual conducts a lesson which is video taped. Once the lesson is finished, the teacher's supervisor asks members of the teacher's class questions about their feelings, thoughts, and achievements during the lesson. The supervisor also queries the teacher about what he/she did during the lesson and why it was done. The final stage involves the teacher being told of the students' reactions. The teacher uses the information, along with their own reflections to think further about their actions and how they might improve.

A second form of reflection is supervision (Houston & Clift, 1990; Ross, 1990). When teachers or counsellors in training are working in a practicum situation, they may become involved in inquiry-oriented activities with their supervisors. The supervisor and the student engage in discussion and question periods to analyze the intentions and beliefs of the learner, the social context, the institutional form, the content and behaviour of the teacher's or counsellor's

instruction and the intended outcomes of their instruction. The ultimate goal is for counsellors or teachers to reflect independently.

The final reflective process to be discussed is journal writing (Ross, 1990). Yinger and Clarke (1981) state that one gains knowledge and understanding through the writing process. Writing allows people the opportunity to elaborate on their ideas, to reread, evaluate and revise. A journal is a document that can be revisited years down the road to gain insight on the present and the future. The benefits of the writing process will allow school counsellors the opportunity to revisit the journal and have fresh in their minds possible trouble areas to avoid when conducting any aspect of their service.

As outlined above, the art of reflecting can take on various forms; journal writing, supervision, or interpersonal process recall. However, the intent of all three forms is to generate possible solutions with the hope of improving the final outcome of events or situations.

Appendix B-Counsellor's Letter

School Letter Head

Date:

To: Preschool - Grade 6 Parents
Fr: School Counsellor
Re: Parent Training Program

Dear Parents;

I will be conducting the parent training program Parents on Board. This program provides parents with information on how to help children in the academic areas, how to talk to their children, how to use discipline, and how to work with teachers for the betterment of their children. The program has been offered on previous occasions and the parental feedback has been very positive.

The program will be offered over three, one and a half hour sessions, starting at 7 o'clock, with the first session beginning on _____ and the others to follow on the _____. The parent text book will be sold during the first session at a cost of $23.

For those parents interested in attending, please fill out the intention form and return it to the school by _____. If you have any questions regarding this program, please feel free to contact the school.

Sincerely yours,

Counsellor's Signature

Intention Form

_____ will attend the parent training program.
Name of Parent(s)

Our children include _____
Names of children and their grades in school

Signature _____

Appendix C-Program Evaluation

What are the positive aspects of this program?

_____

_____

What did you learn from this program that will help you with your children?

_____

_____

What would you have liked to learn from this parenting program, but did not?

_____

_____

How do you think this program could be improved?

_____

_____

Would you recommend this program to other parents?

_____

_____

How could the presentation style of the leader improve?

_____

_____

Other Comments

_____

Appendix D-Checklist

- ✓ Contact the School Board and the School for permission.
- ✓ Carry out the Program Preview with parents
- ✓ Include the preschool parents
- ✓ Photocopy the Leader's Guide
- ✓ Try to reduce the cost to parents
- ✓ Send home personal letter, including intention form to parents.
- ✓ Add a fourth session to the program.
- ✓ Offer the program early in the school year.
- ✓ Follow the 'ground rules' closely.
- ✓ Limit the counsellor-participant ratio to 1-15
- ✓ Place chart information on overheads or use power point on the computer
- ✓ Parent Program Evaluation Form

References

Abidin, R. R., & Carter, B. D. (1980). Workshops and parent groups. In R. R. Abidin (Ed.), Parents education and intervention handbook (pp.107-129). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Canning, C. (1991). What teachers say about reflection. Educational Leadership, 23(1), 18-21.

Clarke, A. (1995). Professional development in practicum settings: Reflective practice under scrutiny. Teaching & Teacher Education, 11(3), 243-261

Copeland, W. D., Birmningham, C., De Le Cruz, E., & Lewin, B. (1993). The reflective practitioner in teaching: Toward a research agenda. Teaching and Teacher Education,9(4),347-359.

Dinkmeyer, D. & McKay, G. (1976). Systematic training for effective parenting. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance.

Gladding, S. T. (1995). Group work: A counselling speciality (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Grant, C. A. and Zeichner, K. M. (1984). On becoming a reflective teacher. In C. A. Grant (Ed.), Preparing for reflective teaching. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Houston, W. R. & Clift, R. T. (1990). The potential for research contributions to reflective practice. In R. T. Clift, W. R. Houston, & M. C. Pugah (Eds.), Encouraging reflective practice in education (pp.208-222). New York: Teachers College Press.

Irving, J. A. & Williams, D. I. (1995). Research and practice: Critical thinking and reflective practice in counseling. The British Journal of Guidance and Counseling, 23(1), 107-114.

Lerner, J. W. (1997). Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis, and teaching strategies (7th ed.). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Popkin, M. H., Youngs, B. B., & Healy, J. M. (1995). Parents on board. Atlanta, GA: Active Parenting.

Putman, R. W. (1991). Recipes and reflective learning: "What would prevent you from saying it that way?". In D. A. Schon (Ed.), The reflective turn, Case studies in and on educational practice (pp.143-163). New York: Teachers College Press.

Ritch, A. (1988). Nobody's perfect. Health and Welfare Canada.

Roberts, T. W. (1994). A systems perspective of parenting: The individual, the family, and the social network. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Ross, D. D. (1990). Programmatic structures for preparation of reflective teachers. In R. T.Clift, W. R.

Stickel, S. A. & Trimmer, K. J. (1994). Knowing in action: A first-year's counselor's process of reflection. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 29, 102-110.

Wagonseller, B. R., Burnett, M., Salzberg, B., & Burnett, J. (1977). The art of parenting. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Yinger, R. J. & Clarke, C. M. (1981). Reflective journal writing: Theory and practice. East Lansing, MI: Institute for Research on Teaching.