

DO YOU KNOW THE HISTORY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT? IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN WHAT IT IS TODAY

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF PARENTS

In 1965, Head Start began as an eight-week Summer Session.

Head Start initially saw parents as learners, seeking ways to enrich their child's experience, and fulfilled its responsibility to them by providing education in such areas as nutrition, budget management and concepts of child development and child rearing.

Parents were encouraged to participate, but no one was really sure how they should participate-what is it that they should be doing? Some programs established career ladders and began hiring parents as Parent Involvement Coordinator, teachers, aides, bus drivers and cooks.

In 1967, it became clear that parents were serving their Head Start programs in constructive and useful ways. Greater recognition and clarification of their involvement became necessary, and the result of this concern was the first formal Manual of Policies and Instructions outlining the four areas of parent participation which are still the hallmark of parent involvement in Head Start today.

- ! Parents as decision-makers
- ! Parents as paid staff, volunteers and observers
- ! Parents involved in activities which they have helped to develop
- ! Parents working at home with their own children in cooperation with Head Start staff

Parents as decision-makers headed the list because it was anticipated that this would be the most difficult to implement. Parents, staff and community representatives needed to develop a partnership in decision-making.

The manual recommended a staffing formula for parent involvement and a hierarchy of parent advisory committees so that parents would be able to influence the program at all levels. In 1969, Manual 10A appeared, titled Parent Involvement, A Workshop of Training Tips for Head Start Staff. It stated that at least fifty percent of the Parent Advisory Committee or Council must be parents and that they must be democratically elected to their posts by the parents of children currently enrolled in the program.

In August 1970, the famous 70.2 was born. The word "advisory" was dropped and Parent Policy Committees and Councils were delegated responsibilities for staffing, budget, curriculum, grant requests and other matters relating to program operation.

Parents were no longer subordinately connected to the program-they became central to it. Their participation was essential.

Head Start's growing recognition of parents as the major facilitators of their children's development also led to the formation of Parent Child Centers in 1968 and Home Start in 1972.

In 1974, the Child and Family Resource Program was created to assure the continuity and integration of comprehensive health and welfare services for children from the prenatal period through the early school years.

In July 1975, new Head Start Program Performance Standards were released.

In 1978, came a draft of new Performance Standards.

In 1978, the Exploring Parenting Program was offered to selected Head Start programs throughout the country as a pilot effort in parent education. The program invited "hands on" participation and input by parents as they explored options in working with their children and strengthened the parenting skills they already possessed.

In 1979, selected state expansion, along with four new Oregon programs.

In 1988, the Oregon Prekindergarten Program was established and UMCHS, Inc. was awarded one of the first grants.

In 1995, Early Head Start was established. Parent Child Centers were converted.

In 1996, new performance standards were issued.

In 1997, full day, full year programs in collaboration with child care became a priority for Head Start expansion.

Parent participation in Head Start has related to increased involvement by the community. Low income persons have been increasingly involved with community institutions, particularly at the decision-making level and in decision-making capacities.