

**INVESTIGATING
A PARENT/TEACHER-LIBRARIAN
COLLABORATION PROCESS
IN A SCHOOL LIBRARY RESEARCH PROGRAM**

by

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Abstract

In school library research programs involving enquiry-based learning, a challenge for students doing research emerges when they take their projects home and turn to their parents for assistance. Often parents do not have sufficient knowledge of the research program and critical thinking to be able to effectively help their children. Many of them are unfamiliar with an inquiry-based research process and this inevitably leads to anxiety for both parents and children.

A literature review revealed that parents do want to help their children at home with schoolwork, but are confused about the amount and kind of assistance they should provide. Moreover, research on parent involvement in school library research programs is virtually nonexistent, which stimulated the researcher to conduct this study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process intended to assist parents wanting to help their children more effectively with research homework. Before the implementation of this study, a school library research program was well-established (1988-1999), but it included no formal integration of parent involvement. The study investigated (a) parent, student, and teacher-librarian concerns that arose during collaboration, (b) resolutions of those concerns,

(c) techniques that facilitated collaboration and parent assistance, and (d) the benefits and disadvantages of the collaboration process.

One questionnaire was mailed at the beginning of the study to the parents of all 72 grade seven students in one Lower Mainland elementary school and, as a final evaluation, a second questionnaire was mailed to the parents of 28 grade seven students who had committed time to be in the study. Between the two questionnaires, a subset of eight parents and their corresponding children became primary subjects and were interviewed after they had worked with their children on research question formulation at home. Previous to working with their children, these eight parents had received a detailed overview of the student research program, two training sessions with the teacher-librarian and a variety of options for communicating directly with her at any time during the study.

A major objective of the study was to collaboratively solve the major concerns that emerged during the study and a procedure was developed for that purpose. The parents and teacher-librarian together created guidelines for future parent involvement where resolutions of the concerns were stated. The greatest concern for all parties was the dilemma of balancing the student desire for independence and ownership of the projects with the parents' offer of help. The guidelines helped clarify the right kind of assistance for parents to give, while the overview and two training sessions increased parents'

research knowledge base and allowed them to suggest improvements to strengthen the collaboration process and the library program.

Because the PTL collaboration process provided all participants with more benefits than disadvantages, both the parents and teacher-librarian unanimously agreed that the PTL collaboration process merited continuance. With the supporting structure of a parent/ teacher collaboration process attached to learning activities at home, parent confidence about guiding children can be increased, the students can see positive results in learning, and a school library research program can thereby be strengthened. The teacher-librarian, the researcher in this study, felt her practice was improved with the addition of the PTL collaboration process. Moreover, its continuance could contribute ultimately to the development of students whose convictions are based on more reflective enquiry and thoughtful research.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my friends and family whose inspiration and support have made its completion possible: to Hazel Starling, our school's longtime teacher-librarian, who showed me that the library is the heart of the school; to my brother, Jim, and my late parents, Ethel and Gilmore Ramsay, so steadfast and true; and to Dr. Mel Shaw, my wise and knowing partner, who convinced me that less is more.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Students in the 21st century will live in an information-rich society where their ability to adapt to change and fulfill their individual potentials will require them to be life-long learners and independent decision-makers. Therefore, they will need to master the processes of research, thinking, and communicating which form the foundation for critical thinking and problem solving. Ideally, a school library program should provide planned resource-based research activities that support the curriculum and contribute to the development of independent learners and decision-makers.

Background

Between 1988 and 1991, the teacher-librarian and staff at a Lower Mainland elementary school collaboratively designed and introduced an Effective Report Writing Process (ERWP) research program in the library for students from grade one to grade seven. Ten years later, this school library resource-based research program of curriculum-related units of study continues. The classroom teacher knows the students and the curriculum while the teacher-librarian knows the resources and procedures for accessing,

organizing, and interpreting information. Much of the success is due to the shared expertise and equal partnership of the teacher-librarian and classroom teacher in planning and teaching the program.

A challenge for students doing research emerges when they take their projects home and turn to their parents for assistance. The participation of parents is somewhat problematical for teachers, since it is difficult for them to ascertain how much of the research work completed at home is the child's work and how much is the parent's. Student ownership of projects, which is emphasized in the ERWP program, can be put in jeopardy when parents work with their children. The problems inherent in parent-assisted student research projects were not addressed when the program was first developed. At that time, students did not work on their research projects at home. Due to time restraints in the school day, teachers have found it necessary for students to continue their research project work at home.

Although teachers want students to be as autonomous as possible in doing their research projects, they realize that in some situations, parent assistance is vital to student success and confidence building. If educators want students to strive to be independent learners, then judicious parent assistance rather than parent domination of student projects is to be sought. Research shows that parents are often confused as to how much assistance they are expected to give or should give (Fullan, 1991). To improve the

students' mastery of research skills at the grade seven level, parents need to be involved in a more informed way. They need a sufficiently detailed overview of the research program, training in effective assistance procedures, and a forum for raising concerns. The challenge for the teacher-librarian is to work systematically and collaboratively with parents to facilitate effective and balanced parent participation with students working on research assignments at home. Fullan (1991), who asserts that the most powerful combination for learning is the family and school complementing each other, supports this kind of parent involvement in instructional activities.

Difficulties arise when parents work with their children on research assignments at home. At present, the grade seven students explore research topics of their own choice. To provide opportunities for them to make critical and informed judgments, students are encouraged to think about their topics and devise workable, stimulating questions on which to base their research. This enquiry-based process is very challenging and some students flounder, even with assistance from teachers. Students who have turned to their parents for help at home have found that their parents do not have enough grasp of the ERWP program and enquiry-based learning to assist them effectively.

The elementary school, in which the research was conducted, is located in a middle class Lower Mainland community. Not only are the

parents generally well educated and supportive of the ERWP program, most show considerable interest in their children's schooling. However, the parents' own schooling experience is very different from the school culture of today where critical thinking is emphasized. In developing a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process, it is hoped that the parents of the students struggling with question formulation will take the time to learn the recommended strategies and help their children to define their research questions. They bring the advantage of knowing their children's interests and experiences to the process. The teacher-librarian's contribution to the collaboration is her knowledge of resources and teaching, especially in the area of critical thinking.

It is a general observation that parents view the teacher as the authority in students' schoolwork and tend not to speak up with their perceptions and opinions, as they feel less knowledgeable. This study will attempt to achieve a genuine collaboration between the parents assisting their children with research projects and the teacher-librarian. Since genuine collaboration requires each participant to be on an equal footing, this will require some shift in the traditional power structure between the teacher-librarian and the parents. In some cases, there may be need for a shift in the power structure between the parent and child. A parent may become too intrusive and undermine the child's initiative and confidence. There is also a

danger of the teacher-librarian being marginalized by dominating parents. For some students, a PTL collaboration process could bring the risk of having to work with impatient, overpowering, verbose, inarticulate, or extremely critical parents. Parents may also find their 12 and 13-year-olds equally difficult. To counter these risks, a policy of open discussion and negotiation will be promoted, with the teacher-librarian's arbitration skills ready, if needed. In order to effect successful innovation in a school library program, the parents will receive training in strategies for effective assistance.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated a PTL collaboration process in a school library research program. Its purpose was to gather and examine data about this process and the results of a PTL collaboration process in order to clearly evaluate whether this collaboration strengthens a school library research program, how it can be improved, and if it merits continuance.

In order to do this, parents were asked by the teacher-librarian to work with their children at home to help them explore possible topics and formulate satisfactory research questions for their grade seven research projects. Parents received an overview prepared by the teacher-librarian that detailed the student research process and research assignments. At meetings

conducted by the teacher-librarian, parents examined research question criteria and learned strategies for assisting students with question formulation. As well, they discussed strategies for effective and balanced parent/student partnerships. Opportunities were provided for the teacher-librarian and parents to have their concerns aired in a genuinely collaborative atmosphere. Finally, parents collaborated with the teacher-librarian to formulate a set of guidelines for future parent involvement in the grade seven ERWP program.

Research Questions

Specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

1. What major concerns of the students, parents, and teacher-librarian are expressed during a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process?
2. To which major concerns are there immediate or potential solutions?
3. What teacher-librarian techniques best facilitate a PTL collaboration process and parent assistance in students' research question formulations?

4. What are the benefits and disadvantages of a PTL collaboration process for the students, parents, and teacher-librarian?
5. Do the benefits for the students, parents, and teacher-librarian outweigh the disadvantages?

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are relevant to the study:

Action research. A research method carried out by individuals directly involved with the social situation being researched. While teachers will usually initiate action research, sustainable improvement will rarely be possible if others involved, such as parents, are not won over to its purposes. The long-term aspiration of action research is always to be collaborative. It is meant to be a continuing effort to closely interlink, relate and confront action and reflection in order to develop one's knowledge (Altrichter, 1993).

Enquiry-based research. Research that begins with formulating a question or problem to be solved rather than just selecting a topic about which to seek information. In order to solve the problem or make a reasoned judgment, critical thinking must be used.

Resource-based learning. It refers to cooperatively planned educational programs that actively involve students in the meaningful use of a wide range of appropriate information sources and technologies.

Ownership/empowerment. It is the feeling of controlling a project or situation and having the freedom to make independent decisions or choices.

Collaboration. It refers to a partnership in which each person's view contributes to an increased understanding of the situation, and no one's point of view will dominate and be taken as the final understanding. It is the variety of viewpoints that creates a rich resource (Winter, 1996).

Giving Voice. It allows both the researcher and participants to explain, interpret, and evaluate the study. Rather than being mere respondents or suppliers of data, it means allowing everyone to contribute a critical perspective that ultimately informs the research (McNiff, 1996).

Summary

A parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process has the potential to strengthen a school library research program. It can resolve concerns about parent assistance in the student research program and create recommendations for effective and balanced parent participation in the

student research process. The major challenge of this study is to coalesce all the multiple perceptions of its participants so the researcher can arrive at clear conclusions about the educational relevance of a PTL collaboration process in a school library research program.

The remainder of the thesis is divided into four parts. Related literature is reviewed in Chapter II. Methodology and procedures are outlined in Chapter III. The findings are presented in Chapter IV. Discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further investigation are put forward in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review for a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process in a school library research program will look at the research on parent involvement in children's education and research about the development of information literacy in school library programs. Within parent involvement research, the literature review will concentrate on parent engagement with learning activities at home. Within the research on information literacy, the review will concentrate on the development of models that emphasize topic exploration, research question formulation and critical thinking.

Parent Involvement

Parent Involvement: Comprehensive Research

The question of parent involvement in schools has been the subject of hundreds of books and articles over the past 30 years. Although the literature appears to be a mass of contradictions and confusions, Michael Fullan (1991, pp. 227-252) declares that one consistent message emerges, that is, the closer

the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement.

Based on research, Fullan advises teachers to “have an explicit, even if small-scale, plan to involve parents... Starting small and building incrementally can lead to multiple forms of community involvement that reinforce each other”(1991, p. 249). He warns teachers not to expect 100% success, but to expect real improvement. He emphasized that teachers engaging parents need to have clear objectives, good materials and training, continuous follow-up, and monitoring that involves parents in suggesting changes and assessing results. As a consequence, Fullan (1991) declares that parents, teachers and students benefit from the development of knowledge and skills and this expansion provides opportunity to achieve shared meanings. The vast majority of parents find meaning in activities related to their own children and it is in “the role of parents and the local classroom and school where the most powerful instrument for improvement resides” (p. 227).

In examining parent involvement in the classroom, Hunter (1989) noted that when parents get involved in children’s educational activities, students’ learning exceeds that made possible by the resources and experience of any one teacher. Many teachers also viewed parents as valued partners in

extending and enriching an educational program beyond the possibilities presented by the most competent and dedicated teacher.

The National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA) in the United States concurs with Fullan that over 30 years of research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and student success. It goes a step further in suggesting that “parent involvement has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of educational reform “(National PTA, 1998, p. 2). The National PTA purports the most comprehensive survey of the research is a series of publications developed by Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla: *The Evidence Grows* (1981); *The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987); and *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement* (1995). Citing more than 85 studies, these publications document the profound and comprehensive benefits for students, families, and schools, when parents and family members become participants in their children’s education. From the pertinent research, some of the findings are:

- ❑ When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents’ education level.
- ❑ The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.

- ❑ When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviour.
- ❑ Different types of parent/family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parent involvement activities must be well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- ❑ Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents.
- ❑ The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years; there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels.
- ❑ School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- ❑ The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.
- ❑ When parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators improves, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive.

- ❑ Parents are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist parents in helping their children with their schoolwork.
- ❑ When they are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, parents put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective, but have been hesitant to contribute. (National PTA, 1998, pp. 4-6)

Other researchers have investigated the involvement of the public in schools and discovered some challenges for educators. Researchers from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, based at Brown University in Rhode Island, examined 175 public engagement projects across the United States. Their report, Reasons for Hope, Voices for Change (1998), found that:

- ❑ engagement challenges traditional notions of power
- ❑ the work of engagement is difficult to do and sustain
- ❑ “process” outcomes are powerful but hard to measure
- ❑ the process of engaging a broad group of people to discuss education issues has its own value beyond the product

Related studies have found that parents have definite ideas about how they wanted to be treated by educators. Lindle (1989) found that authenticity was what parents and communities wanted. They did not want educators to be patronizing or talk down to them. Conversely, educators assumed that

parents expected them to be formal and authoritative, but parents actually wanted the opposite. Collaborating with parents “takes honesty and humility, patience and kindness, openness and empathy. It takes *authenticity* on the part of educators” (Brandt, 1998, p. 30).

Parent Involvement: Instructionally-Related Research

Early research in the field of parent engagement in learning activities focussed on an exploration of factors that accounted for success in student achievement. Fullan (1991) refers to the research of Fantini (1980) and draws the conclusion that an ongoing home-based program involving parents as tutors increases student achievement. Recent research continues to confirm that the most promising practice for boosting school performance is help at home rather than parental participation at school (Finn, 1998, p. 20). One researcher sees even wider participant benefits, in declaring that “community involvement contributes to improvement in... the depth and quality of the learning experiences in which parents, teachers, and students participate” (Hatch, 1998, p. 16).

Dr. Joyce Epstein, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and Co-Director of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children’s Learning, has emerged as one of the principal researchers in parent involvement and schools. In one extensive study of parent involvement,

Epstein (1986) concludes that “teacher practices of parent involvement had more dramatic positive links to parents’ reactions than general school-to-home communication or parent assistance at the school” (p. 280).

Although parent engagement in learning activities at home is a less frequently used form of parent involvement (Epstein, 1986, p. 282), there has been a social movement toward the development of programs involving parents in instructional activities at home. One such program, called TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork), was designed by Joyce Epstein from the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children’s Learning at Johns Hopkins University (Epstein, 1993). The program goals of TIPS are to increase parental awareness of and involvement in their children’s schoolwork and to increase students’ ability and willingness to talk about schoolwork at home. In examining some major research about instructionally-related parent involvement, Fullan (1991) states:

It is intuitively, if not theoretically obvious, that direct involvement in instruction in relation to one’s own child’s education is one of the surest routes for parents to develop a sense of specific meaning vis-à-vis new programs designed to improve learning.... Experience as home tutors and other forms of involvement with teachers provide the opportunity for every parent at the elementary grade levels. (p. 237)

However, Fullan (1991) claims that it is not easy to set up effective parent-school activities, but it can be done with success with the vast majority of

parents. Epstein, in Brandt (1989), estimates that only about 2 to 5% of parents are unreachable.

In further work, Epstein and co-researcher Dauber concentrated, respectively, on teacher attitudes and practices of parental involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1988) and parents' attitudes and practices (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). From the research they found the following:

- Parent involvement with elementary school programs was stronger, more positive, and more comprehensive than those in middle grades [grades 5-9].
- The individual practices of each teacher at particular grade levels and in particular subject areas are the keystone for strong programs of parent involvement.
- Programs and practices were stronger in schools where teachers saw that they, their colleagues, and the parents all felt strongly about the importance of parent involvement.
- Without the schools' assistance, parents' knowledge and actions to help their children are heavily dependent on the parents' social class or education.
- Teachers with more positive attitudes toward parent involvement report more success in involving hard-to-reach parents. (cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 234)

In a comparison study focusing on parents' attitudes and activities, Dauber and Epstein (1989) found that:

- Parents in all of the schools in this sample are emphatic about wanting the teachers to advise them about how to help their own children at home at each grade level.
- Parents believe that the schools need to strengthen practices such as giving parents specific information on what their children are expected to learn each year.
- The school's practices to inform and involve parents are more important than parent education level, family size, marital status and, even grade level. (cited in Fullan, 1991, pp. 234-235)

In conducting a statewide survey on parent involvement of 1269 parents in Maryland, Epstein (1986, p. 289) found two very important results. That is, most parents think they (a) should help when teachers give them activities to do at home, and (b) could spend more time helping children at home, if they were shown how to do specific learning activities. Epstein and Dauber (1991), reporting on teacher attitudes toward parent engagement in learning activities, confirmed that teachers expect parents to monitor student homework, but they rarely give parents guidelines about the purpose of the homework or how best to help their children. Some educators are using new programs and approaches such as TIPS to engage students and parents in

discussions about their academic subjects. Evaluations of these approaches indicate that parents can effectively interact with their children in reading, language arts, and other homework activities in the elementary and middle grades (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Herrick & Epstein, 1991). Regarding parent involvement with early adolescents, Epstein and Connors (1995) state that "students... see that influential people in both environments are investing time and resources to work together to help them become successful students. The students' own work is legitimized by this process of mutual support" (p.142). Furthermore, this promotes a very important aspect of education to both parents and students, that learning is a lifelong process.

Although parents and teachers may communicate an important message about school to children, Epstein mentions a potential obstacle for upper intermediate teachers who might wish to involve parents in learning at home. In her survey of parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement, Epstein (1986) found that "fewer and fewer teachers helped parents become involved as the students advanced through the elementary grades. Thus, parents' repertoires of helping skills are not developed and improved over the school years, and they tend to taper off or disappear as the child progresses through school" (p. 291). Having said that, it is encouraging to note that research conducted by Epstein and her colleagues over the past ten years shows that teachers in middle grades can implement good practices to

involve parents in learning activities with their children and that program goals can be accomplished. As a result of such practices to involve parents, middle grade students report that “they learn things about their parents they would not have known without the assignments that require and guide interaction at home” (Epstein, 1993, p. 165).

Parent Involvement: Partnerships

In recent research, the term, parent partnership, appears more often than the term, parent involvement, indicating a development towards more reciprocal interactions and shared responsibilities between parents and educators. Epstein (1987) notes that early studies of the effects of parent involvement could not be explained by established theories which stress that schools or families are most effective if they set separate goals and unique missions. Instead, a social organizational perspective of overlapping spheres of influence was needed to explain that the most effective families, schools, and communities have common goals and shared missions concerning children’s learning and development. Epstein and Dauber (1996) further noted that in the 1980s studies began to clarify terms, changing from *parent involvement* (activities left up to the parent) to *school and family partnerships* (programs that include school and family responsibilities). Researchers now generally agree that school, family and community

partnerships are needed to improve the children's chances of success in school today.

By contrast, Connors and Epstein (1995) confirm that "some educators and some families continue to function more as separate institutions" (p. 442). Reliance on the delegation model in public education has created a fundamental gap between families and schools. In this model, Seeley (1989) states the parents do not have to be involved, because the job of education has been delegated to schools. Conversely, school staffs do not see parent involvement as part of their professional role and see it as an interference with the jobs that have been delegated to them. He writes "in a paradigm shift to a partnership model, parents and teachers see themselves as mutually accountable and responsible and therefore work collaboratively to empower all the players in ways that promise higher levels of social and academic achievement" (p. 48).

Epstein (1992b) emphatically states "as the 1990s begin, the focus of research and practice is clearly on partnerships and shared responsibilities" (p. 17) and Connors and Epstein (1995) report that "practices of schools to involve families have evolved from focusing on the separate responsibilities of educators and families to recognizing their overlapping responsibilities in a program of school and family partnerships" (p. 442).

How educators view students makes a difference to educators' concept of partnerships. In Epstein's view (1995), "if educators view students as children rather than just simply students, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students" (p. 701). Research shows that parents have preferences about the kind of roles they wish to play. Epstein (1994) has found that parents want to be viewed as knowledgeable guides, but they do not want to take on the role of the teacher. Research with thousands of parents has shown parents want to "motivate, encourage, monitor, keep track of, interact with, and talk about school work at home" (p. 47). In discussing roles and responsibilities, it is critical to note that school, family, and community partnerships cannot produce successful students by themselves. Rather, partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide, energize and motivate students to produce their own successes" (Epstein, 1995, p. 702). Students must take a central role in their learning and in school and family partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 1996).

There is increasing pressure on schools in the 1990s to make changes to accommodate parent partnerships. In this time of engaged parents (Atlas, 1997), teachers must see themselves as collaborators with both students and

parents if schools are to enhance the lives of students (Coleman, 1998, p. 97).

Coleman suggests that “the most important task facing the school in the immediate future is collaboration with parents in building active communities of learners” (1998, p. 43). Connors and Epstein (1995) have found that:

The need for cooperation is forcing a shift in emphasis from changing families to meet the needs of schools to changing schools to meet the needs of children and families. (p. 440)

Some important patterns relating to partnerships have emerged in Epstein’s (1995) surveys and field studies. These include:

- ❑ Affluent communities currently have more positive family involvement, on average.
- ❑ Just about all families care about their children, want them to succeed, and are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities so as to remain good partners in their children’s education.
- ❑ Just about all teachers and administrators would like to involve families, but many do not know how to go about building positive and productive programs and are consequently fearful about trying. This creates a *rhetoric rut* in which educators are stuck, expressing support for partnerships without taking any action.

- ❑ Just about all students at all levels want their families to be more knowledgeable partners about schooling. (Epstein, 1996, p. 703)

In 1997, the American National Parent Teacher Association (<http://www.pta.org/>) adopted Epstein's six categories of partnership activities which have been useful to schools seeking to create comprehensive partnerships. These have become the six national PTA standards for parent and family involvement:

1. Standard I: **Communication** - Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
2. Standard II: **Parenting** - Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
3. Standard III: **Student Learning** - Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
4. Standard IV: **Volunteering** - Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
5. Standard V: **School Decision Making and Advocacy** - Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
6. Standard VI: **Collaborating with Community** - Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Williams and Chavkin (1989) sought to identify characteristics of promising parent involvement activities in their five-state region and found seven essential elements common to successful parent involvement programs:

1. Written policies that legitimized the importance of parent involvement and helped frame the context for program activities.
2. Administrative support
- 3 3. Training for parents and teachers that focused on developing partnering skills
4. Partnership approach to planning and assessing programs
5. Two-way communication between home and school on a regular basis
6. Networking with other programs to share expertise and resources
7. Evaluation that enables parents and teachers to make program revisions on a regular basis

There are no shortcuts to the process of developing such partnerships and programs. Epstein and Connors (1995) emphasize that “three to five years are needed to build strong partnerships with families, and even more time is needed to assure a lasting structure of successful practices” (p. 140).

Research is showing that partnerships can have potentially important results for all students, parents and teachers. The expected results for parents in partnerships with the school include confidence about productive

curriculum-related interactions with children. The expected results for teachers include improved school/home communications and better understanding of families and new approaches to homework. In at least one research study, Epstein (1995) states that school, family, and community partnerships have resulted in:

- ❑ The view of the parent as more similar to the teacher and of the home as more similar to the school
- ❑ Parents knowing how to support, encourage and help the student at home
- ❑ Parents having increased understanding of the instructional program and of what the child is learning in each subject
- ❑ Parents having appreciation of teaching skills of the educators
- ❑ Parents having awareness of the child as a learner
- ❑ Teachers producing better designs of homework assignments
- ❑ Teachers gaining respect for family time
- ❑ Teachers feeling satisfaction with family involvement and support
- ❑ Teachers being aware of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions (p. 706)

Research indicates that long-term benefits do result when parents enter schools to speak and be heard on an equal footing. Coleman (1998) dispels the myth that some parents are not able to help their children be successful in

school. Rather, he found that parental attitudes and aspirations, not skills or education, made the greatest difference to student achievement. His extensive research into parent, student, and teacher collaboration confirms that “it is not who parents are that is important, but what they do, with and for their children, to prepare them for success in school” (p. 145). June Cavarretta (1998), in her role as parent, states that “I cannot think of another volunteer experience I’ve had that has been as meaningful as my participation in school improvement. My work counts. My voice is heard. I’ve made a difference for my children” (p. 15).

Parent Involvement: Needed Research

Students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved. In her review of research in the Encyclopedia of Education Research (1992), Epstein notes that the studies include few measures of school or teachers’ practices to involve parents or parents’ responses to particular practices. New research is needed to explore the effects on teaching practices of specific types of involvement parents want most, that is, how to work with their own child at home in ways that help the student succeed and keep the parents as partners in their children’s education across the grades (Epstein, 1992a).

In an examination of over 200 articles on parent involvement, Baker and Soden (1997) noted that methodological limitations have compromised the rigor of much parent involvement research. They made seven recommendations for future research, including use of experimental procedures (especially random assignment), making explicit which aspect of parent involvement is being measured, and the use of objective measurement such as direct observation and standardized data collection tools. Epstein and Sanders (1996) conclude:

In sum, questions about school, family and community involvement and effects are being studied with increasing sophistication. Researchers across disciplines employ many methodologies including surveys, case studies, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal data collections, field tests, program evaluations, and policy analyses. As research proceeds, researchers must ask clearer questions, employ better samples, collect deeper data, create more fully-specified measurement models, and conduct more elegant analyses to more clearly identify the results of school-family-community partnerships. (p. 6)

Parent Involvement: Summary

In conclusion, it is clear that research supports the merits of parent partnerships with the school in children's education. This literature review

indicates that the vast majority of parents find meaning in activities related to their own children, but there are few studies that specifically measure teachers' practices to involve parents. To reach important educational goals in the 21st century, "parents and teachers should recognize the critical complementary importance of each other in students' lives" (Fullan, 1991, p. 250).

Information Literacy

Development of School Library Research Programs

School library programs in Canada and the United States have changed over the last thirty years. Traditionally, school librarians taught students to locate and access information in the library, but not usually in the context of the classroom curriculum. Later, they expanded their role to teach research and study skills where students were taught to locate and use materials for integration with classroom content instruction, either in the classroom and/or the School Library Resource Centre (SLRC) by the teacher-librarian and the classroom teacher together (Haycock, 1985). This heralded the beginning of collaborative program planning and teaching (CPPT) in the School Library Resource Centre (SLRC).

Information Literacy: Development

The next stage was teacher-librarians teaching information literacy in partnership with the principal and all other staff. "Teaching information literacy encompasses more clearly a total school commitment to assisting students to develop the skills necessary for purposeful inquiry, informed decision-making and lifelong learning" (Haycock, 1985, p. 11). Literacy in this sense is not simply reading and writing, but knowing how to critically examine, interpret and synthesize information from a wide variety of sources.

The choice of research topics was expanded to include more relevant problems or concerns and the research process included more metacognition so students concentrated on the process of learning how to learn. Students were also made aware of the affective domain throughout the research process (Kuhlthau, 1995). Teacher-librarians used more finely-tuned questioning techniques that demanded critical thinking.

In Loertscher and Woolls' summary of the research on information literacy (1997), they write of the historical antecedents of critical thinking and the field of school libraries. They note that modern education borrowed the idea of critical thinking from the great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Bacon, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Newton, Boyle and many others. They comment further that the scientific method has ruled much of the industrialized world in the 19th and 20th centuries and the teacher

as authority and student as passive learner was encouraged by the behaviourist, B. F. Skinner. This thinking led to the idea that, with carefully designed instruction, “anyone can master any concept of knowledge” (p. 344).

With the work of John Dewey in the 1930s, educators created theories of enquiry or constructivism. This led teachers to become co-learners and facilitators of learning with their students. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that constructivist-based education is a major key to academic achievement (Loertscher & Woolls, 1997).

In school libraries, the same transformation has taken place. The teacher-librarian’s interest in instructional design led to ‘resource-based teaching’. Loertscher and Woolls (1997) comment that this movement:

[resource-based learning] evolved into increased interest in information literacy, the library media version of constructivism and critical thinking. The term, resource-based learning, was popularized in the late 1980s, signifying the adoption of information literacy principles in learning projects using a wide variety of information sources and technologies. Resource-based learning is a school library term for enquiry-based learning or project-based learning, terms known more widely in the education field. (p. 344)

As an antecedent to current models of information literacy, Kuhlthau (1987) published a review of the research on information skills, encouraging teacher-librarians to make information literacy the foundational element of their programs.

Information Literacy: Models

In order to conceptualize information literacy, researchers have devised a variety of frameworks in the past ten years. The following models have gained substantial acceptance in the field:

- **The Stripling and Pitts Research Process Model** (1988) guides students through each stage of the research process, but at each stage, students are asked to reflect upon what has just been done.
- **The Kuhlthau Model** (1989) places focus on student feelings and frustrations and shows students how their confidence levels are affected at various stages of their research.
- **The Eisenberg and Berkowitz Big6 Skills Model** (1990) is the most well-known model in the field and is popular due to its simplicity and ease of use. It emphasizes starting with a strong research question that outlines the research problem and includes a parent guidebook (1996) that translates the research model into a process parents can use to help children learn while doing school-related homework or assignments.

- **The O'Connell and Henri Information Process Model (1993)** gives an Australian perspective where information processing are linked with literacy skills, critical thinking and problem-solving strategies.
- **The California School Library Association Information Literacy Model (1994)** gives many clear suggestions for incorporating information literacy into a variety of instructional systems and content areas.
- **The Pappas and Tepe Pathways to Knowledge Information Skills Model (1995)**, in conjunction with Follett Software Company, creates an elaborate rendition of information literacy with methods of teaching and learning embedded in the model.
- **The MacKenzie Research Cycle Model (1996)** helps students deal critically with Internet information. It emphasizes that "the greatest technological tool is the question" (MacKenzie, keynote speech at the International Association of School Librarians (IASL) Conference at the University of British Columbia, 1997).
- **The Loertscher Organized Investigator Model (1997)** is a circular rather than linear model with the student at the centre. It encourages students to spend much more time reading, viewing and listening to information before writing and allows each learner to internalize a variation of the model based on their learning style, their work habits, and their information-rich environment.

- **The American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AASL/AECT) Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning (1998)** sets guidelines for the interaction of media literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking. It views the role of the teacher-librarian as information specialist, teacher and instructional consultant. Expanding the context of learning information literacy to include a interconnected learning community of students, teachers, administrators, parents and all communities outside the school, it emphasizes the importance of the collaboration between the teacher-librarian, students and other members of the learning community. It helps students develop essential research questions that go beyond simple fact-finding and promote thoughtful interpretation, synthesis, and presentation of newly found knowledge.

In Canada, each provincial teacher-librarian association has developed an approach or a model of information literacy. In the western provinces, these are:

- Alberta: Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills (1990), based on the Alberta Ministry of Education's Focus On Learning Model (1985), emphasizes evaluation at every step of the research process with teacher-as-facilitator and includes a comprehensive 84-page instructional booklet for teacher use.

- British Columbia: Developing Independent Learners: The Role of the School Library Resource Centre (1991), published by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, adapts a linear model created by the Coquitlam School District (1988) that fuses information processing skills with research strategies. It includes detailed instructions for teacher use.

Recent developments urge teacher-librarians to go beyond the current information literacy models to embrace media/ visual literacy and technology literacy and to recognize that “students must and do take their information not only from print, but from what they see, hear, and experience and that much of that information is now coming through [the] Internet which demands navigational facility” (Loertscher & Woolls, 1997, p. 353). Several authors are warning about major problems with information literacy and electronic information. The Information Standards for Student Learning (AASL/AECT, 1998) emphasize critical evaluation and ethical use of information (standards 2 and 8, respectively). Fitzgerald (1997) lists nine skills needed to effectively evaluate electronic information and Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1996) have added a checklist for needed computer and Internet skills at each level of The Big6 Model.

Information Literacy: Summary of Research

In conclusion, it can be stated that the approaches, models and manuals of information literacy are helping many teacher-librarians translate theory into practice. In the most recent summary of information literacy research, Loertscher and Woolls (1997) report that "information literacy models are keeping up with the advance of research in cognitive development and solid principles of inquiry" (p. 364). However, they state that while there are many teaching styles, the inquiry method is not currently the most popular model. Teacher-librarians, therefore, must work within a wide range of teaching and learning styles to achieve their goals in implementing information literacy. Although authentic assessment is assisting educators to know whether students are learning more effectively using information literacy principles, Loertscher and Woolls (1997) report that assessment of information literacy is just in the beginning stages.

Though information literacy is an attractive element of school library programs for teacher-librarians, Loertscher and Woolls (1997) recognize that "... the notion that all students should be critical thinkers is not universally accepted. Parents, religious leaders, governmental leaders, business leaders, ideologists and even teachers are willing to tolerate critical thinking as long as it does not challenge their own sphere of control" (p. 362). In order to keep information professionals in the schools, they wisely recommend that

teacher-librarians be politically astute by not just concentrating on enhancing information literacy, but by remembering to work to (a) create capable and avid readers, (b) collaborate with teachers and students in creating effective learning experiences, and (c) ensure that technology enhances the learning process.

“Our students face an information-rich future in which change will be one of the few constants of their life experience. Their ability to adapt and fulfill their individual potentials will require them to be life-long learners and independent decision-makers” (American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998, paragraph one). Research shows that educators are designing and refining workable information literacy models that are leading students to become more skillful, purposeful users of information and be confident that their convictions are based on thoughtful research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

In this study, the teacher-librarian, who is also the researcher, set out to examine a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process in an elementary school library research program. Prior to the introduction of a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process, the research program in the school was well-established (1988-1999), without deliberate or formal integration of parent involvement. With the increased parent involvement of both mothers and fathers in the school, the administrators, the classroom teachers and the teacher-librarian thought it was time to add a parent component to the research program at the grade seven level. It was the teacher-librarian's experience that many parents had difficulty working with their children on research projects and that this caused considerable anxiety on both sides. This anxiety had made an impact on the effectiveness of the library research program and it needed to be addressed. By collaborating with parents and supplying them with training and materials, the teacher-librarian intended to encourage them to articulate how they worked with their children so that the concerns of all participants could be reflected upon and solved collaboratively. By gathering and examining sufficient data about the

results of this process of PTL collaboration, the teacher-librarian hoped to more clearly evaluate (a) whether it strengthened the school library research program, (b) how it could be improved, and (c) if it merited continuance.

Sample Selection

In order to obtain a sample, the parents of all 72 grade seven students were invited be in the study. The parents of 28 students were able to commit time to the study and they met with the teacher-librarian and agreed to help their children explore possible topics and formulate satisfactory research questions for study at home.

Eight parents, already in the study, volunteered to participate in a more in-depth examination of parent assistance. The eight parents and their eight children became primary subjects in the study and formed a convenience sample. To verify they represented the larger population, profiles were created for all 16 primary subjects, along with a school profile (see Appendix F). The profiles revealed a considerable range within each group of eight parents and eight students.

Methodology

The research was conducted during the 1998/1999 school year in a Lower Mainland elementary school in which there were three classes of grade seven students (72 students in total) and the researcher was the school's teacher-librarian. The school, named by general location only, was situated in a very stable, upper-middle class neighbourhood with well-educated parents. The majority of the children in grade seven had been enrolled in the school since kindergarten and all were fluent English speakers.

The parents of the 72 grade seven students were mailed a letter in which they were invited to participate in the study and reminded again of the invitation in a notice in the school newsletter. A week later, an introductory parent questionnaire (see Appendix A) along with the overview of the school library research process with detailed assignments written by the teacher-librarian (see Appendix B) was mailed to the parents. From this mailing, the parents of 40 students returned the questionnaires to the school secretary. All questionnaires were completed anonymously. The parents of 28 students later returned their consent forms agreeing to be in the teacher-librarian's study.

In Stage One of the study, 27 parents attended one or both meetings with the teacher-librarian. In Stage Three of the study, a subset of eight parents (two fathers and six mothers) and their eight corresponding children (six boys and two girls) volunteered for an in-depth examination of working together at home on the student research projects, making them the primary subjects of the study. All eight students signed consent forms to participate in the study.

In August 1999, the parents of the 28 students who had consented to be in the study were mailed a final questionnaire that sought to gather their retrospective opinions about a PTL collaboration process in a school library research program. The parents of 22 students returned the final questionnaires to the school secretary. Questionnaires were completed anonymously.

The teacher-librarian decided to use a qualitative survey study to conduct her action research. The researcher in the study, being the teacher-librarian in the school where the research took place, had the dual role of critically examining her own practice as a teacher-librarian, while investigating the collaboration process with the parents. Like Richard Winter (1998), the teacher-librarian believes that action research should be about giving voice to practitioners (persons investigating their own practices) and to community members.

A research diary documenting “the development of perceptions and insights across the different stages of the research process” is often used in action research (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993, p. 11). It is one of its most important methods, “ensuring that data collection is not artificially separated from reflection and analysis” (Altrichter et al., 1993, p. 12). The aim of a diary is qualitative description and interpretation from the inside, rather than quantitative measurement and prediction of variables from the outside. Therefore, the teacher-librarian kept a diary containing personal accounts of observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, ideas and explanations. It was kept on a continuous basis and entries were properly dated. It formed a substantial portion of the narrative data.

The study was conducted over the 1998/1999 school year and the following summer. It was divided into six sections or stages. Each stage followed the action research procedures of strategic planning, action, observation, evaluation and self-critical reflection.

Stage One (October 1998). The first section of the study began with an introductory meeting for all parents of the 72 students enrolled in grade seven at the school. Almost all the parents attended. The classroom teachers and administrators outlined the grade seven curriculum in general and the teacher-librarian acquainted parents with the essential features of the Effective Report Writing Program (ERWP) and set of twelve assignments for

students to complete in order to create their research projects. With her permission, Patricia Finlay's article, *From Finding Out to Thinking About: Changing Research Assignments into Critical Challenges*, was circulated to parents wishing to know more about enquiry-based learning.

All grade seven parents were then mailed an eleven-page written overview of the grade seven ERWP program with detailed assignment instructions along with a brief questionnaire and covering letter to collect parent reactions to the overview and thoughts about parent involvement in their children's research projects. The completed questionnaires gave a broad sense of parents' reaction to the teacher-librarian's written and oral explanation of the ERWP program. The overview was intended to become the major source of written materials for the parents and students working on question formulation in the study. Observations and reflections in the teacher-librarian's diary formed the remainder of the data for this period.

Stage Two (November 1998). The sample size in the second stage consisted of the twenty-eight parents who had consented to be participants in a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process. In two evening meetings, parents received training in:

- ◆ The difference between typical retrieval research reports and reports that develop critical challenges where students are asked to make judgments and formulate conclusions.

- ◆ The collaborative development of criteria for powerful, workable research questions. A university professor, who is a director of a Critical Thinking Cooperative, led this training session to assist in the understanding of powerful research questions.
- ◆ Strategies for keeping the balance between parent assistance and student ownership. An area counsellor from the Vancouver School Board was the guest lecturer on this topic at the second meeting. A booklet for parents of homework tips gleaned from a variety of sources was handed out.

Data in Stage Two came from observations and reflections in the teacher-librarian's diary and her discussions with parents and colleagues before, after and during the November meetings.

Stage Three (November/ December 1998). Eight of the 28 parents already in the study subsequently volunteered to a more in-depth examination of working at home with their children to formulate good research questions for their projects. A videotape of the teacher-librarian's instructions to students about question formulation was available for parent assistance. To facilitate two-way communication with the teacher-librarian, parents were given a variety of options (come into the school, phone, fax, send notes or e-mail messages). To keep the channels of communication open, each student kept thinking logs of observations and opinions that were given to the

teacher-librarian upon completion. Following their work on the question formulation assignments for the ERWP projects, the parents and students were individually interviewed by the teacher-librarian at the school.

During this time (Stage Three), data was collected from 16 taped and transcribed student and parent interviews. Specific questions were standardized for all eight parent interviews and for all eight student interviews, including questions that would provide feedback to the initial parent questionnaire. Parent interviews were approximately seventy-five minutes in length and student interviews were about thirty minutes.

Stage Four (January/ February 1999). With parent assistance, students continued to work through the remaining stages of their research projects. All projects were completed and handed in to the teacher-librarian by March 12, 1999.

Data for this phase came from informal parent and student conversations and observations and reflections in the teacher-librarian's diary.

Stage Five (March 1999). In this section of the study, the 28 parents (including the subset of eight parents and their children) were given the option to help formulate guidelines for parent involvement. The parents collaborated with the teacher-librarian to create a set of recommendations for future parent participation in a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process

and the eight students were interviewed together in order to gather their opinions about parent assistance. Using the recommendations from parents and students, the teacher-librarian then prepared a draft document which was given back to the parents for study and feedback. As well, a group interview with the eight students was conducted and transcribed to obtain their perspectives on the PTL collaboration process and parent assistance with their projects. The remainder of the data came from parent e-mail correspondence, student thinking logs, and observations/reflections in the teacher-librarian's diary.

The sources of data for this section were comprised of the teacher-librarian's notes written while collaborating on guidelines for parent involvement, the written feedback on the draft document, the final guidelines for parent involvement document (see Appendix D), and the student group interview transcription. As in all the other stages of the study, the teacher-librarian's research diary became part of the data.

Stage Six (August 1999). The mailing of a final questionnaire to all 28 parents in the study in August 1999 formed the last part of the study. With the new school year about to begin, the teacher-librarian asked parents to reflect on their experiences with the past year's parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process and with parent assistance at home with student research projects. An opportunity to suggest recommendations or

improvements to the collaboration process for the 1999/2000 school year was also included in this final questionnaire.

Data Description and Analysis

Altrichter et al. (1993) assert that one criterion for judging the quality of action research is the extent to which the researcher has considered the alternative perspectives of the participants, of interested colleagues, or perspectives drawn from research and other comparable situations. Because the researcher was also a participant in the study, it was extremely important that she maintain intellectual integrity and take great care that prejudices and preconceived notions did not improperly influence perceptions and interpretations. In this study, the teacher-librarian made every effort to uncover the beliefs and opinions of the 28 parents and eight students and to seek feedback from them so that misinterpretations and misunderstandings between the researcher and participants were minimized.

There were several sources of data from the parents and the students in the study. Main sources of data from the parents came from the eight formal interviews, the two parent questionnaires, the teacher-librarian's diary and the guidelines for parent involvement. Other sources included parents' e-mail messages, faxes, and notes to the teacher-librarian, the eight individual student interviews and one student group interview, and students'

thinking logs. Main sources of data from the students came from the eight individual student interviews, students' thinking logs, the one student group interview, and the teacher-librarian's diary. Other sources included the eight parent interviews and the guidelines for parent involvement. The main source of data from the teacher-librarian came from her research diary entries and her interview questions.

Each formal interview of parent or student was audio taped and later transcribed. Questions (Appendix C) were prepared prior to each interview to ensure the coverage of certain topics, but were left open enough to allow respondents to expand their answers.

The initial parent questionnaire in Stage One, the final parent questionnaire in Stage Six, and the teacher-librarian's overview were piloted to clear up any potential confusion in wording. The overview was reviewed by two other teacher-librarians, a grade seven teacher and the principal of the school where the research took place while the questionnaires was examined by three parents (teacher, lab technician and sales representative) and three educators. Based on a Semantic Differential scale, the questionnaires, which quantified parents' perceptions, attitudes and interpretations about the student research program, parents' roles in helping their children, and a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process, were tallied numerically and an analysis was made of the results. An independent assistant made the

initial tallies and these were later verified by the teacher-librarian. Parents' comments written on the questionnaires were transcribed for examination as well.

For analysis, the composite data was coded and sorted under the following categories that correspond to the research questions:

1. Concerns of parents, students and teacher-librarian that were expressed in the study
2. Immediate, potential or limited resolutions to the expressed concerns
3. Techniques that best facilitated collaboration and parent participation in the student research process
4. Benefits and disadvantages of a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process in a library research program from the perspectives of parents, students and the teacher-librarian

The validity of the study was strengthened as the teacher-librarian had two research assistants identify and verify the coding of the concerns, techniques used, benefits and disadvantages as expressed by parents, students and the teacher-librarian from the composite data (parent questionnaires, parent and student interview transcriptions, parent e-mail messages and written notes, student thinking logs, guidelines documents and the teacher-librarian's research diary). The first assistant was the retired teacher-

librarian who implemented the research program in 1988 in the Lower Mainland elementary school where the study took place. The second assistant was a grade four teacher colleague at the school who was very familiar with the research process.

After the findings were recorded by the teacher-librarian, copies were circulated to the eight parents and their children in the study for their examination and feedback. The teacher-librarian wanted the parents and students in the study to comment on the accuracy and intent of their quoted comments that appeared in the presentation of the findings. In this way, the perspectives of the parents and students were carefully reflected in the teacher-librarian's presentation of the findings.

Summary

A parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process represents an innovation in a school library research program and a new kind of parent involvement in the school. The teacher-librarian chose a qualitative survey study for her action research and sought data from multiple sources. Data was coded and categorized to correspond to the research questions. From the composite and coded data, the teacher-librarian presented her findings.

Most importantly, all participants' perspectives were considered when recording and discussing the findings and making conclusions. Although not generalizable to all grade seven students, this study involved mainly middle class students, and it is hoped that insights gained from this study will be of some use to a wider audience.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

The research findings will be presented in this chapter in the same order as the five research questions were posed in the first chapter. The major concerns of parents, students and teacher-librarian will be presented first and followed with the present, potential and limited resolutions of those concerns second. The techniques that best facilitated a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process and parent assistance in students' question formulation will be presented third. The benefits and disadvantages of this collaboration, as viewed by the teacher-librarian, the parents and the students, will be put forward fourth. The balance of benefits and disadvantages to a PTL collaboration process will be reported last.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the eight parents and eight students who were the primary subjects in the study, the first parent or student in each of the two groups was identified by using the number 1 and the gender abbreviation of male or female. The second participant was identified with the number two and gender abbreviation, and so on. For example, parent one became P1/M, parent two became P2/M, while parent

three became P3/F. Therefore, when a quote is followed by the subject identifier (P3/F), the quotation was made by the third parent who is female.

The following table contains the subject identifiers for the eight parents and their corresponding children who formed a subset within the larger group of 28 with whom the teacher-librarian was collaborating. The eight parents and their children were formally interviewed in more detail about working at home on research question formulation. The table also shows a breakdown of the research questions the students selected for individual study.

Table 4.1: Subject Identifiers

Parents	Their Corresponding Children	Research Question for Student Project
P1/ M (Parent One/Male)	S1/M (Student One/ Male)	What steps are being taken to stop nuclear war?
P2/M (Parent Two/ Male)	S2/M (Student Two/ Male)	Can my dad's atherosclerosis be reversed?
P3/F (Parent Three/ Female)	S3/M (Student Three/ Male)	Is it a good idea for me to go on to ice climbing from rock climbing?
P4/F (Parent Four/ Female)	S4/M (Student Four/ Male)	What are the important ways dogs affect mankind?

P5/F (Parent Five/ Female)	S5/M (Student Five/ Male)	Is painting in oils for me?
P6/F (Parent Six/ Female)	S6/M (Student Six/ Male)	Would an iMAC or a DELL computer be the better purchase for me?
P7/F (Parent Seven/ Female)	S7/F (Student Seven/ Female)	As a teenage girl, how could I avoid becoming anorexic?
P8/F (Parent Eight/ Female)	S8/F (Student Eight/ Female)	Would being a physician be good for me?

Research Question One: What major concerns do the students, parents and teacher-librarian have about a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process for parent assistance?

To get as much feedback as possible, parents were given a variety of options for voicing concerns – through written questionnaires, interviews, e-mail, phone, fax, or in person. The initial parent questionnaire produced the highest number of parent responses of concerns before a PTL collaboration process began, while the eight in-depth individual parent interviews, after completion of the question formulation assignment, gave the greater detail about these parental concerns. The second parent questionnaire at the end of the study provided a final reflection and evaluation of a PTL collaboration process with parent suggestions for improvement.

The majority of parent and student concerns emerged in the lengthy interviews with the subset of eight parents and their children, after they had actually worked together on the topic exploration and question formulation assignments during Stage Three of the study. The following table indicates the major concerns of parents, students and the teacher-librarian throughout this PTL collaboration process and whether resolutions were possible.

Table 4.2: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study	From Parents	From Students	Teacher-librarian	Resolution of Concern
1	Anxiety about difficulty and scope of student research project <input type="checkbox"/> Time demands and worth of collaboration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Gaining sufficient information and direction to work effectively <input type="checkbox"/> Using research question criteria effectively	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	The right kind of assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing student independence with parent offer of help <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with abundance of ideas exchanged during question formulation assignment at home	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Gaps in communication: <input type="checkbox"/> between parent/child <input type="checkbox"/> parent/teacher-librarian <input type="checkbox"/> teacher-librarian/child	Yes	No	Yes	Limited
5	Fear of: <input type="checkbox"/> Parent criticism of the research program <input type="checkbox"/> Not comprehending parents' perspectives <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/teacher-librarian interaction	No	No	Yes	Yes

Four Major Parent Concerns

Parent perspectives: The initial questionnaire.

The parents of 40 students (55%) completed the initial parent questionnaire in Stage One of the study. Although one parent indicated “the [student research] process is a great one for developing study and research strategies” and another parent commented that the research program in the school library was an “excellent program leading to critical skills used in post-secondary education and many work environments”, clear concerns about the program did emerge from the questionnaire responses. The major concerns centred on (a) the difficulty and scope of the student research projects as presented in the teacher-librarian’s overview of the grade seven research program, and (b) whether parents ought to be involved in helping their children with research homework.

Twenty-three parents (57%) stated that they were overwhelmed by the teacher-librarian’s lengthy overview of the research program (see Appendix B) with 31 parents (77%) indicating there was too much detail contained in it. These responses led to further comments about the difficulty, scope and time demands of the research program on parents and students. Thirty-two parents (80%) indicated that they thought the research process would be difficult for their children. Three parents (7%) wrote that the project would

be too time-consuming for students and would interfere with other assignments and outside school activities.

In spite of concerns about the difficulty and scope of the student research projects, the majority of parents (90%) accepted the role of helping their children with information-processing assignments at home and 30 parents (75%) expressed interest in learning more strategies for helping their children with their research homework this year. Although 13 parents (33%) indicated moderate concern about having time to help their children, 30 parents (75%) felt they could cope with the demands their children's research projects placed on their time and resources. More parents were sure about the amount of assistance than the kind of assistance to give. This is illustrated in the following table:

Table 4.3: Initial Parent Questionnaire Reactions to the Grade Seven Research Program

The Grade Seven Research Program (Effective Report Writing Process)	Positive Parent Responses	Total Parent Responses
Helped with previous research projects	36	39
Want to learn more strategies to help children at home	30	40
Can cope with the demands that help places on time and resources	30	39
Have ample time to help	24	40
Certain about <i>amount</i> of help to give	27	40
Certain about the <i>kind</i> of help to give	21	40

Total Number of Respondents = 40

Some concern was expressed whether parents ought to help their children in the information-processing skills at home. Three parents (7%) were opposed to any kind of parent participation. One wrote:

Who had the idea of parent participation? Are we parents not busy enough? When we come home in the evening after a day of hard work, now we have to do the homework of our children, too, thank you very much. I am sure the children will learn a lot from it. I don't think that it is necessary to involve the parents.

Another parent felt that "...trying to help with past ERWP projects has led to a lot of conflict in the home. I feel it is my responsibility to teach my child basic life skills to use out in the world and not get so involved with school work." On the other hand, three parents (7%) indicated strong feelings about the importance of parent participation in their children's schoolwork. One parent wrote that "...assignment #1 [topic exploration] really makes or breaks the enthusiasm and efforts the student may devote to the research. It should be given a lot more emphasis with maximum parent participation."

The meetings.

Two parent/teacher-librarian meetings in Stage Two were held to (a) invite parents to be part of the study, (b) discuss the grade seven research program, (c) explain the meaning of critical thinking, and (d) provide advice

for parents doing homework with their children. Since the parents had already received a detailed overview about the research program and the 12 assignments, the meetings were meant to supplement the overview with further information and direction for parents. Although parents led busy lives and had prior commitments, seventeen mothers and ten fathers attended the meetings while eighteen mothers and ten fathers sent signed consent forms to the teacher-librarian. The parents of 28 students consenting to be in the study later formed the committee that created and provided feedback for future collaboration and parent assistance guidelines.

The teacher-librarian anticipated the raising of concerns by parents at these initial meetings, but this did not happen. In one of the eight parent interviews later, one mother suggested that in the meetings "... we were still quite in the listening mode, because we're just beginning. We're just absorbing"(P3/F). Another mother stated it took time for people to be comfortable because "people don't know each other. It's not a safe environment yet" (P7/F). During an informal conversation with the teacher-librarian, another parent felt the meetings were more for giving out a lot of necessary information and guidelines, rather than raising concerns. Yet one mother countered that "everyone had a chance to speak, if they wanted to" (P6/F).

Parents' perspectives: The interviews.

Most of the findings about parents concerns emerged from the eight parent interviews. These parent concerns can be broadly divided into four areas (see Table 4.2) and each concern will be discussed in the order it appears in the table.

Table 4.2.1: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study
1	Anxiety about difficulty and scope of student research project <input type="checkbox"/> Time demands and worth of collaboration

What was of interest to the researcher was the difference in parental reactions to this concern raised in (a) the initial parent questionnaire, before the students' projects began, and (b) the eight parent interviews conducted in Stage Three after they had worked with their children on question formulation. The concern about the upcoming student projects being too time-consuming and difficult for both children and parents were dispelled by the eight interviewed parents. All eight parents stated that they found it possible to schedule time to work with their children and all found their children capable of completing the assignments. One parent stated, "I always thought to myself that it would take too much time and it was this and that. It hasn't been that way at all. It hasn't encroached a whole lot on your time"

(P8/F). Another parent indicated that the project, rather than being too time-consuming, was, in contrast, worth the commitment of his time:

Definitely worth the commitment of my time. I think [my son] in the past has viewed the role of a parent, teacher, school, as all sort of separate functions....So he doesn't view it now as such an isolated thing – school, myself, my learning, you know. I think he's seeing it as the big picture: all of these things blend together to make something work. (P2/M)

Table 4.2.2: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study
2	Gaining sufficient information and direction to work effectively <input type="checkbox"/> Using research question criteria effectively

Parents were concerned about being sufficiently informed about the student research process. In conversation with the teacher-librarian, one parent stated that one could find information and direction for math homework, for instance, in a textbook, partly because it is formula-driven. However, she stressed that for research homework, parents cannot find all this training in a book and must rely on what the teacher provides. The teacher-librarian in her detailed overview of the research process provided the major written information about the grade seven research process for

students. Three parents (37.5%) who were the primary subjects of the study mentioned that, although they found the overview daunting on first reading, they found the details it contained most valuable when actually working on the assignments (P4/F, P3/F and P5/F). The remaining five parents in the group (62.5%) did state that the overview with the detailed description of the question formulation assignment was clear and helpful. One mother felt that she still needed more than just the teacher-librarian's overview as a training manual (P4/F). She would have liked to look at completed grade seven projects from previous years to compare these with this year's project assignments and that this would have helped her see the overall picture right from the beginning. In the guidelines meeting later, the teacher-librarian brought up this point and the parents agreed it was a worthwhile addition to the parent training.

The second parent concern arose again in the eight parent interviews when discussing the two parent training meetings from Stage Two of the study. Without exception, all parents who attended the first meeting indicated they found the training in critical thinking from a university professor in the first parent meeting useful and illuminating. They enjoyed the small group work and opportunity to make responses. One parent stated, "he explained what critical thinking was, and then everybody kind of gave their opinion of who they thought was a critical thinker and why they thought that,.... They

think in a certain way to arrive at these points or arrive at an answer. His explaining that really made a difference” (P5/F).

At the first meeting, the parents in attendance indicated that the teacher-librarian’s explanation and expansion on the students’ question formulation criteria was informative and important in order for them to assist their children. However, three of the eight parents (P6/F, P7/F and P8/F) expressed concern about the effective use of the teacher-librarian’s criteria for a good research question, after they had actually tried using the criteria with their children. They found that they had been trained insufficiently in this area at the parent meetings. All three parents mentioned narrowing the topic to manageable proportions as a difficulty. In an e-mail correspondence with the teacher-librarian, one of the three parents stated that, when working with her child, she wondered how to keep the parameters of the research question narrowed to a manageable grade seven level rather than a post-secondary one (P7/F). She also thought the criterion of long-term relevance to the student was exceedingly difficult to ascertain. One mother (P4/F), who had been absent from the first meeting, expressed concern about the missed training and this was resolved later in the guidelines for future parent involvement.

A second parent meeting was held in Stage Two at which time a Vancouver area counsellor was to give parents advice about homework

strategies. Most of the eight parents felt the second meeting did not reach its objectives as the speaker got off topic and on to parenting in general. One parent said, “ I didn’t come to be taught how to parent. I came to learn strategies for assisting my child in homework” (P3/F). On the other hand, one father stated he had learned some important points about parent assistance, specifically, about the importance of good communication and being respectful about their children’s thinking, thereby giving the children confidence (P1/M).

Although not all eight parents in the in-depth study attended both meetings, all parents mentioned how satisfied they were that they had gained enough information and clarification at the meetings and/or in the teacher-librarian’s overview to work satisfactorily on question formulation with their children. Three parents (37.5%) mentioned how pleasantly surprised they were at their children’s knowledge of question formulation, once they began working together (P2/M, P5/F and P7/F).

Table 4.2.3: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study
3	<p>The right kind of assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing student independence with parent offer of help <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with abundance of ideas exchanged during question formulation assignment at home

In interviewing the parents, the greatest concern was about whether they had offered the right kind of assistance to their children and what kind and depth of role(s) they ought to play. Three parents (37.5%) were unsure if they had been effective with all their help in previous years (P5/F, P6/F and P8/F) and another parent stated “the only reason I thought I’d like to get involved [in collaboration with the teacher-librarian] ... is just to see if we were doing the right thing” (P4/F).

In working with their children, six of the eight interviewed parents (P1/M, P3/F, P4/F, P5/F, P6/F and P8/F) felt that a supportive role rather than an active or dominant role was right at the grade seven level. One mother was now acting “...more as a resource person, a consultant, sitting back. He usually wants me to proofread and I don’t do any of that anymore. Or he wants to do it all on his own. The mark I get then, he says, is mine. That’s fine, taking ownership” (P5/F). Another mother stated that “it [collaboration] has helped me an awful lot as a parent, I think, in understanding really that boundary where I’m safe to go, what’s beneficial versus what’s maybe damaging by overtaking and doing. I’ve become very clear. Somehow you have just opened that for me” (P7/F). Only one parent openly worried that her son might misconstrue her kind of help to mean completing the project for him. She commented that during the process of working with him on question formulation, he did make an attitude change. “But he’s come to see

now it's his project. Mom's there to be a back up but not to sit down and write the report for him" (P4/F). Three parents (37.5%) felt that working in collaboration with the teacher-librarian had confirmed that they were giving the right kind of assistance and there was the added benefit of becoming co-learners with their children (P1/M, P6/F and P8/F).

Five parents (62.5%) mentioned the most difficult aspect of giving the right kind of assistance was balancing their children's growing sense of independence with their offer of adult learning support (P1/M, P3/F, P4/F, P5/F and P7/F). One father stated, "We usually try to get somehow involved in schoolwork, but it's not so easy to tackle it... because the project is their work.... You don't want to get too much involved. You finish somehow doing part of the work" (P1/M). In contrast, another father thought he and his son had achieved a good balance (P2/M). He stated his son "is now knocking on my door instead of me knocking on his", attributing this change partly to the genuine interest he had in his topic. The father and son mutually stated they worked extremely well together, made decisions jointly, and that a teacher/parent collaboration process had been the impetus for this occurrence.

Five interviewed parents (62.5%) said their children felt strongly about their independence and had clear ownership of their projects. One of the five parents mentioned that her child was very good at saying no to parent

suggestions that did not suit (P7/F). Although their children's independence was difficult for them to work around, seven parents (87.5%) indicated that their children enjoyed working with them. One father stated he felt some strain in the relationship with his son, because his son was somewhat rebellious about the research process as a whole (P1/M). However, he indicated that some of his resistance was due to wanting "to conserve his individuality and his points... But something got back and he thought about it" (P1/M).

Table 4.2.4: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study
4	Gaps in communication: <input type="checkbox"/> between parent/child <input type="checkbox"/> parent/teacher-librarian <input type="checkbox"/> teacher-librarian/child

Concerns about gaps in communication between parent and child or between parent and teacher were mentioned by four parents (50%). Two parents (25%) stated that their children did not bring notices home to their attention (P1/M and P4/F). At the first meeting, one mother noticed that other parents at the meetings seemed to be better informed by their children about the research instruction that had taken place in class (P6/F). In order to increase communication and interaction, another mother wondered if the

partnership of parent/ teacher-librarian could be expanded to include the student in a three-way collaboration of parent/ teacher/child. “With the parent collaboration, maybe having a meeting with all the kids, too. Now that would be really good... Then it would be really like a brainstorming session” (P8/F). Two of the eight parents cautioned that the teacher-librarian’s use of jargon was confusing, especially the phrase, “making a web” in the first assignment of topic exploration and that this was a barrier to communication between teacher and parent (P2/M and P4/F).

Parents’ perspectives: The final parent questionnaire.

The final questionnaire, mailed in August 1999 to parents of all 28 students in the study, was completed anonymously by 22 parents (79%). The results became a final and more reflective source of data for evaluating this preliminary study of a PTL collaboration process from the parents’ perspectives. The following table outlines the tabulated results.

Table 4.4: Parent Reactions to a PTL Collaboration Process in the Final Questionnaire in August 1999

Questionnaire Item	Positive Parent Responses	Total Parent Responses
Difficulty and scope of student project: manageable	20	22
Teacher-librarian’s overview: informative	21	21

Teacher-librarian's overview: too much information	17	21
1st parent training meeting on critical thinking: informative	19	19
2 nd parent training meeting on homework advice: informative	14	19
Parent working with child: Satisfying and worthwhile	20	22
Child's reaction to parent offer of help: cooperative	19	22
Parent view of the right kind of assistance: certain	16	22
Student desire for independence versus parent offer of help: a dilemma	12	21
PTL collaboration process: beneficial	20	22
PTL collaboration process: parent concerns aired	21	22
PTL collaboration process: time manageable	12	22
Creation of guidelines for parent involvement: beneficial	18	22
Creation of guidelines for parent involvement: sufficient	21	22
Treatment of parents in a PTL collaboration process: fair	22	22
Continuance of a PTL collaboration process for next year's grade seven parents: profitable	22	22

Total Number of Respondents = 22

Twenty parents (91%) indicated that a PTL collaboration process had been beneficial and 21 parents (95%) reported that their concerns had been aired. All parents (100%) reported that a PTL collaboration process was profitable and merited continuance.

In looking back at the PTL collaboration process and parent assistance with research projects as a whole, the majority of parents (91%) found the difficulty and scope of the projects manageable. For the concern about gaining sufficient training and materials, all parents (100%) reported that the teacher-librarian's overview was informative, although 17 out of 21 parents (81%) indicated that the overview was still too much all at once. As one parent commented, "The project was fine, but the first information package was overwhelming." Parents responded differently to each of the two parent training meetings. For the first meeting on critical thinking and the research process, all the parents found the meeting informative and suitable. For the second meeting on homework advice, not as many parents (74%) found the meeting informative, while more parents (89%) still thought it suitable for their needs.

As far as knowing the right kind of assistance to give children in research homework, more parents (73%) in the final questionnaire responded positively than those in the initial questionnaire (53%). However, 12 parents (55%) in the final questionnaire still reported a dilemma in balancing the student's desire for independence against the parent offer of assistance. The majority of parents (86%) in the final questionnaire found their children cooperative in working with them at home, indicating good communication between parents and children. Most parents indicated no difficulty with two-

way communication with the teacher-librarian in a PTL collaboration process. Four parents wrote additional comments on how approachable and accessible the teacher-librarian was throughout the study.

Although prefacing his/her remarks with “I think the concept of the research project is excellent,” one parent expressed concern that “not all the children receive the same help or support from home. Solution - less relying on parental help for all.”

Three Major Student Concerns

Student concerns can be divided into three broad areas (see Concerns 1-3 in Table 4.2) The students expressed concern about the difficulty and scope of the assigned research projects, just as their parents had in the beginning of the study. From the composite and coded data, it was found that five interviewed students (62.5%) expressed concern about the difficulty and scope of the research project at the beginning, but the same students indicated that they found the projects easy to complete, once they had gone through the twelve assignments for the projects.

Four students (50%) expressed concern in using the research question criteria, especially narrowing their topics to something manageable, but, at the same time, they all felt that their parents helped them solve that dilemma. One student expressed several times how much the detailed descriptions of

the assignments had helped make the project easier for him and his mother to do (P4/M).

Five students (62.5%) expressed strong feelings of ownership of their projects and that they, rather than their parents, made most of the decisions in working on question formulation (S1/M, S3/M, S5/M, S7/F and S8/F). One student stated, "I feel comfortable with that, because it's my project after all." (S7/F) and in the group interview at the end of the study, another communicated, "My mom helped me a little bit on some parts, but not a lot....I'm just trying to do the project on my own....I wanted to see if it would affect my mark, if she didn't help me too much" (S5/M). In contrast, one student felt decisions were arrived at mutually between him and his parent (S2/M) and this was the right kind of assistance to have. However, two students stated that mom made more of the decisions (S4/M and S6/M). One boy qualified his independence by saying, "So far it's been pretty even. She's [mom] given a lot of good ideas and most of the topic. But I've been thinking on my own" (S4/M). In summary, student feelings about parent dominance with assistance versus student ownership were mixed.

Six of the interviewed students (75%) found it relatively easy to work with their parents and said they adjusted to the give-and-take required in a discussion of ideas. Seven students (87.5%) said they shared 50/50 in the work with their parents.

Three students (37.5%) reported having difficulty with coping with the enthusiasm and abundance of their parents' ideas during question formulation at home (S1/M, S7/F and S8/F). One of them said that "sometimes she [mom] thought in another way. She thought that maybe it shouldn't be this way and we got into arguments sometimes" (S1/M). Another of the three said, "Sometimes I felt like they were telling me what to write sometimes, but most of the time I felt they were just trying to give me ideas and stuff" (S8/F).

The Five Major Teacher-Librarian Concerns

The teacher-librarian's five major concerns about parent collaboration and assistance in the research program (see Table 4.2) were expressed in the questions she posed in the interviews and questionnaires and in thoughts and reflections in her research diary.

A concern that the teacher-librarian shared with students and parents was the anxiety about the difficulty and scope of the projects. She worried whether students could handle the work and whether she had kept the well being of her students in mind in developing the research process. The findings show that students were anxious about the scope and difficulty, but that the projects were actually easier to complete than the first impression the teacher-librarian's overview had given the students. Parents responded in the

same way, after working with their children. In the final parent questionnaire (August 1999), responses (91%) indicated that the scope and difficulty of the projects were manageable, looked at from a distance.

As the teacher-librarian could not calculate the time restraints of parents with any certainty, she was concerned whether she had placed too much stress on the parents to commit time to attend meetings and get training in order to assist more effectively. The eight interviewed parents (100%) felt that the concern about time commitment to a PTL collaboration process was unfounded. In the final questionnaire, 12 out of 22 parents (55%) indicated that a PTL collaboration process was time manageable, rather than time-consuming. None of the 22 parents commented on the time commitment being beyond their ability to cope.

Like the parents, the teacher-librarian was also worried whether the meetings would provide enough of the right kind of training and direction. Because she had invested so much time and care in creating the eleven-page overview, she was concerned about the clarity of her materials for parent use. She considered clearly written instructions to be central to the success of a PTL collaboration process. Part of the written instructions involved following seven criteria for a good research question. The teacher-librarian was concerned about the clarity and appropriateness of these criteria for parent and student use.

Whether parents would usurp student ownership of projects and whether parents would give the right kind of assistance that would allow students to be independent decision-makers was worrisome for the teacher-librarian.

Gaps in communication were ever-present concerns of the teacher-librarian. She looked for such occurrences between parent/ teacher-librarian, parent/ child and teacher/ student and found some cases of each. Linked to communication was the teacher-librarian's concern about student management of parent ideas during dialogue times at home. In her diary she recorded that she likely needed to help students cope with dialogue surrounding question formulation with parents at home in the future.

Table 4.2.5: Major Concerns of Parents, Students and Teacher-Librarian That Emerged in the Study

	Concerns That Emerged During the Study
5	Fear of: <input type="checkbox"/> Parent criticism of the research program <input type="checkbox"/> Not comprehending parents' perspectives <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/teacher-librarian interaction

The teacher-librarian shared many of the same concerns as the parents and students, but she did have concerns that were exclusively hers. In her diary she wrote that "many teachers fear parent criticism of their programs and many parents fear teacher criticism of their children. That mutual fear

reduces the chance that parent/ teacher involvement will begin". She pondered why she had not involved parents in the research project earlier in her career and, like other teachers, she decided that she had been held back by fear of criticism by parents (Epstein, 1982) and the doubts that parent involvement would be worth the trouble. As the study progressed, she noticed that she became less fearful and saw parents more as allies.

Not a parent herself, the teacher-librarian wondered whether she would fully comprehend the parents' points of view. However, she found that parents were most articulate about their views and once they knew of her concern, made even more effort to be clear.

The teacher-librarian was also concerned about the parent/teacher-librarian interaction and fearful about parents responding to working as equal partners with her. In her diary she reported the somewhat disturbing quietness of parents in the meetings, but then read what Michael Fullan (1991, p. 249) had written on that subject, that many parents and teachers "also may feel discomfort in each other's presence due to lack of familiarity.... As teachers and parents interact on a regular basis around specific activities, then reservations and fear become transformed with positive results for parent and teacher attitudes" (p. 237). That seemed to become the case as the study proceeded.

**Research Question Two: To which major concerns are there
immediate or potential resolutions?**

The subsequent resolution of the concerns raised by parents, students and teacher-librarian throughout the study have been put into three categories:

- (a) concerns resolved during the collaborative period, (b) concerns with suggested resolutions for utilization during the next collaborative period, and
- (c) concerns that have limited resolutions.

Resolutions: Parent Concerns

Of the four major concerns of the parents in the study outlined in Table 4.2, one had immediate resolution, two had potential resolutions that needed a trial period in next year's collaboration process and one concern has limited resolution at this time.

The first concern about the difficulty and scope of the student research projects emerged before students actually began working on the projects (see Table 4.3). It was evident that the parents who completed the initial questionnaire felt overwhelmed by the teacher-librarian's overview and details about the 12 assignments received in the mail. However, during the actual student research work and afterwards, both interviewed parents

(62.5%) and students (62.5%) stated that the research projects were not as hard as they had first imagined. The eight primary subjects of the study dispelled this projected concern in the initial questionnaire, as did 20 of the 22 parents (91%) who completed the final questionnaire.

Three interviewed parents (37.5%) contributed to the resolution of the concern about gaining sufficient information about homework strategies by suggesting improvements to the parent training program in the future (P1/M, P2/M, and P7/F). One of them stated, "I'd like to see more collaboration with parents. I'd like to see more interplay with themselves" (P2/M). In separate interviews, they stated they would be eager to learn from sharing homework tips with other parents and that a meeting of this nature could take place at the September curriculum meeting for grade seven parents next year. In the final questionnaire, one parent suggested "having more general informative meetings, probably at the beginning of each new step in the process."

Through the PTL collaboration process, all four interviewed parents who expressed concern about the right kind of assistance (Concern 3 in Table 4.2) stated they had become more certain about the right kind of assistance to give through a PTL collaboration process. The final questionnaire results echoed that same response with a clear majority of parents (73%) indicating they were certain about the right kind of assistance to give. One parent

commented, "I have a good understanding of where to help and when not to" while a second parent stated that he/she learned it was appropriate to help and guide the child and be involved in all aspects of his/her work. Another parent suggested that it would be an idea to "have children and parents attend meetings together for a better understanding of working together".

All the primary subjects in the study (eight parents and their children) indicated satisfaction with their achieved balance of student independence and offer of parent assistance. The four parents who particularly mentioned concern about the balance thought they had found the right balance while working through a PTL collaboration process. The one father and son, who engaged in some argument while discussing question formulation, agreed that the parent offer of help must not supersede the child's desire for independence and ownership of the project. Five students (62.5%) indicated strong ownership of the projects with sole decision-making authority and the other three students indicated that they allowed their parents to make decisions with them and felt satisfied with that arrangement. In the final questionnaire, 12 out of 22 parents (55%) still found this balance between student independence and parent guidance a dilemma. However, there were many parent comments that indicated strong feeling about having found the right balance. One parent anonymously commented that "this project was

good for both my daughter and me. I truly learned how to help her in a non-intrusive way through deeper questioning of her thoughts and opinions.”

In the final parent questionnaire, several parents praised e-mail as a great time-saver, while several others suggested improvements in communication between parent and teacher-librarian. One parent suggested more frequent communication while another parent indicated that more general information meetings at each new step of the research process would improve the two-way communication process. A third parent stated that it would be helpful to have a phone number where the teacher-librarian could be reached after school hours, when parents and children are working together at home in the evenings. A fourth parent thought a designated voice mail would help those who do not have e-mail. Several parents commented on their agreement with the idea in the guidelines of having an established availability time for parents and students to meet with the teacher-librarian. One parent commented that “the existing channels were sufficient – a) asking child to ask the teacher-librarian, b) writing a note to the teacher-librarian, c) calling the teacher-librarian at school, and d) making an appointment, if necessary.”

Resolutions: Student Concerns

Two of the three major concerns expressed by the eight students found resolution during the collaboration process (see Table 4.3). After first reading the teacher-librarian's overview, five students (62.5%) worried about the difficulty and scope of the projects. However, all indicated that their worries were, in fact, unfounded. Half of the students in the study, who experienced difficulties and frustrations narrowing their topics and questions, stated that their parents had helped them solve the difficulties. Four students in the study (50%), who did express some anxiety about parent dominance of their project work, were able to resolve the concern during the work time with their parents. There were differences in students' desire for independence in completing the projects. Five students (62.5%) strongly indicated ownership of their projects and the other three stated they were satisfied with sharing decision-making with their parents. All students indicated they had maintained the level of independence that they wanted to have in completing their projects and all agreed that they, and not their parents, had written their own projects. Moreover, all of them stated that their parents had given them the right kind of support and guidance generally, although three of them (37.5%) experienced difficulty coping with the enthusiasm and force of their parent's ideas and suggestions.

Resolutions: Teacher-Librarian Concerns

Of the five major teacher-librarian concerns, two had immediate resolutions, two had potential solutions, and one concern had only a limited solution.

Concerns about the difficulty and scope of the projects and the time demands and worth of the collaboration process emerged because the teacher-librarian overwhelmed parents and students at the beginning of the research projects with a overlong and too detailed overview and description of assignments. These concerns were resolved when the students and parents realized, after actually working on the assignments, that the difficulty and scope was well within their capabilities, the time demands were quite reasonable, and the commitment of time worthwhile for all eight parents and students.

Generally, the teacher-librarian found her written materials were clear for parents, except for some rare use of teacher jargon in the research process overview. Two parents (25%) stated that teacher jargon in written instructions had created communication gaps between parents and the teacher-librarian. Their suggestions to eliminate jargon contributed to the potential resolution of this concern. They also suggested that number limits in the assignment instruction sheets would give them a better idea of what to

do and this is in the plans for 1999/2000 assignment instructions (see Appendix E).

The group of eight parents indicated that they mainly received the right kind of training and direction, although there were areas in the training that could be improved. The eight interviewed parents and the 22 parents in the final questionnaire clearly found the first parent meeting more useful than the second one. When asked in the final questionnaire to comment on working with their children on future projects, one parent commented that he/she felt better equipped to help, now that he/she had been through a PTL collaboration process.

The concern about gaps in communication between parents and students has a limited resolution because the students must accept their central role in being messengers and the teacher-librarian is not certain how to ensure this. More research and thought is needed to provide a potential and successful resolution to this concern.

The concerns that were exclusive to the teacher-librarian seemed to resolve themselves as the study proceeded and the teacher-librarian became less fretful and more confident about the collaboration process. Most parents in the final questionnaire (95%) indicated that their concerns had been aired in a PTL collaboration process.

Research Question Three: What teacher-librarian techniques best facilitate a PTL collaboration process and parent assistance in students' question formulation?

Some techniques facilitated a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process and parent assistance more than others did. The following table outlines the major techniques that facilitated the collaboration process and parent assistance.

Table 4.5: Teacher-Librarian Techniques That Facilitated Parent Collaboration and Parent Assistance in Student Research at Home

1	Depth, organization and availability of written and recorded instructions about student research process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The teacher-librarian's overview and description of the 12 assignments ❑ Set of research question criteria for question formulation ❑ Clear and published assignment schedule well ahead of time ❑ Video of classroom instruction in research process
2	Training meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Selection of topics: critical thinking and the research process; homework advice ❑ Prepared handouts ❑ Meeting organization: format, length, and timing of meetings
3	Two-way communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Increased availability of teacher-librarian through e-mail and meetings ❑ Opportunity to suggest improvements to collaboration and parent assistance
4	Respectful parent/teacher-librarian interaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Parents being treated fairly throughout collaboration

Techniques: The Teacher-Librarian's Overview

It was the teacher-librarian's intention to provide sufficient written and recorded information about the research program so parents would be knowledgeable enough to help their children effectively. Her technique was to create an overview and description of the 12 assignments that made up the grade seven research projects and to provide a video of the teacher-librarian's classroom instruction for the question formulation assignment. Over 75% of the parents who completed the initial questionnaire (40 parents) indicated that they found the teacher-librarian's detailed overview of the grade seven research process clear, well-planned, useful, interesting and effective. The following table indicates the responses.

Table 4.6: Parent Reactions to the Teacher-Librarian's Overview in the Initial Parent Questionnaire of October 1998

Teacher-Librarian's Overview of Program	Positive Parent Responses	Total Number of Parent Responses
Clear	34	38
Useful	35	40
Effective	31	38
Well-planned	34	39
Interesting	32	40
Helpful	32	39
Learned a lot	29	40
Satisfying	29	40

Total Number of Respondents = 40

However, 23 parents (57%) in the initial questionnaire felt overwhelmed by the details of the research assignments contained in the overview and the projected difficulty and scope of the research program for their children.

According to parent responses in the initial parent questionnaire, the content and availability of the written instructions for the parents facilitated parent assistance, but the timing of the delivery of the instructions created concern. Thirty-one parents (78%) found the overview too detailed on first reading before helping their children. However, according to the primary subjects of the study who used the overview when working with their children, seven of the eight parents stated that they learned a lot from reading the overview and found it helpful. One parent stated that he would like to have had less teacher directions and more opportunity to engage in peer discussion about the assignments (P2/M).

The overlong, but informative overview of the research process was clearly useful to all parents who were the primary subjects in the study (100%) and all 22 parents (100%) who responded in the final questionnaire. Although some teacher jargon was present, all interviewed parents (100%) considered the language of the details and examples in the twelve written assignment instructions clearly written and an invaluable resource. Contained within the overview were details about each assignment. In the

assignment on question formulation, seven criteria were included for formulating a strong research question. One parent stated that the criteria were excellent “because all of these things narrow it [the research question] again and focus it. That was helpful. These are tools, really” (P7/F). A video of teacher instruction to the students regarding question formulation was available but only viewed by one parent who deemed it helpful (P1/M).

Techniques: The Meetings

The initial training meetings, prior to parents actually working at home with their children, was seen by all the interviewed parents (100%) as beneficial. In the subset of eight parents, one father felt that “it’s more profitable to be, let’s say, instructed on how to work on that kind of school project instead of striving blindly” (P1/M). In the final questionnaire, 19 out of 19 parents (100%) found the first meeting informative and suitable to their needs.

Parents also reacted very positively at the first parent meeting about the research process and critical thinking. The concise format and short one-hour length of the meetings made a difference to them. In interviewing parents later, many mentioned how fascinated they were with the university professor’s presentation on critical thinking. They also commented on how much they had enjoyed reading Patricia Finlay’s article (1998) on infusing

students projects with critical thinking techniques, which had been distributed previously to the parents. It was very satisfying for the teacher-librarian to hear that her efforts to find excellent speakers and writers were helping in the collaborative process.

Techniques: Two-Way Communication

A concern about communication emerged through the collaboration process with parents. Among the primary subjects in the study, five parents (62.5%) had e-mail at home. Four (50%) sent e-mail messages to the teacher-librarian and the one who did not said he was glad it was available for use. Having opportunity to complete questionnaires and to make suggestions to the teacher-librarian on how to improve the research program opened up greater two-way communication opportunities for parents. The formulation of guidelines by parents and the teacher-librarian were seen as sufficient by 21 of the 22 parents (95%) who completed the final questionnaire.

Providing more ways to communicate with parents (e-mail, especially) improved the opportunity for parents to communicate, but still gaps in communication appeared in a few cases. Four parents (50%) mentioned gaps in communication in their interviews. Two of the four (P2/M and P4/F) stated that the use of jargon in one instance in the overview

disturbed their communication with the teacher-librarian. Both parents suggested that the teacher-librarian eliminate use of jargon in her future overview. In spite of increased opportunity to communicate, three parents (37.5%) experienced difficulties in receiving information from their children regarding notices sent home with them about the collaboration process or learning about the research project procedures that went on in class (P1/M, P4/F and P6/F)

Techniques: Parent/Teacher-Librarian Interaction

It was always the teacher-librarian's intention to treat the parents respectfully, equally and fairly throughout a PTL collaboration process. In the final parent questionnaire, all 22 parents (100%) indicated they were treated fairly by the teacher-librarian and all interviewed parents responded similarly.

Research Question Four: What are the benefits and disadvantages of a PTL collaboration process in a library research program at the grade seven level for parents, students and teacher-librarian?

The parents, students and teacher-librarian considered the benefits and disadvantages of a PTL collaboration process from their individual

perspectives and because the results differed in some respects, each group will be presented separately in this section.

Parents' Perspectives: Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

Table 4.7: Parent Perspectives on the Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	<p>Training and materials from teacher-librarian eased parent assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eased parent process of balancing student independence with parent offer of help and helped parents determine the right kind of assistance 2. Eased parent process of monitoring work because more informed about what was expected in research process and when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could monitor more complex homework 3. Increased communication with teacher-librarian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunity to clarify program objectives and discuss student difficulties
2	<p>Improved parental self-image</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More knowledgeable help increased confidence 2. Parent seen by children in a more positive light
3	<p>Improved interaction with children</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More valuable involvement 2. Parents become co-learners 3. Increased future assistance for younger children advancing to grade seven

Parents mentioned several advantages to collaboration with the teacher-librarian, particularly the increased knowledge from training materials and meetings. One mother thought that what had really helped her was “some of the discussion around this particular project. It’s given me some insight where it can influence the process without actually doing the work [for the children]...I can quite confidently say that she [my daughter] would not have gotten the same result working on her own as we did when the two of us worked together” (P7/F).

Another parent felt the extra instructions at the parent/teacher meetings cleared up confusions remaining from perusing the overview and this clarification helped a great deal when it came time to work with his child. The collaboration opened both his wife's and his eyes about "some of the assistance we could offer that we didn't even think about until we started doing this...and I think there is a wealth of knowledge out there with parents that the school system is not utilizing. And at no cost, by the way (laughs). So I would encourage this format in lots of different areas"(P2/M). In support of collaboration, one parent felt that the written document was beneficial, but then "...the second piece, having the parent time with you specifically, so that we could talk about what the overall objectives of doing this research project are, is most valuable... still I wasn't connecting all of those steps in my own mind until you stood in front of us and went through with the flip chart and talked about the steps and the process at the grade seven parents' night meeting....I realized in my own mind that all of this was coming together" (P7/F). In the final questionnaire, 20 parents (91%) indicated that they found working with their children both satisfying and worthwhile.

The eight interviewed parents stated that the collaboration confirmed that they were giving the right kind of assistance. When asked what the advantages of collaboration were, one mother voiced that, "I could explain it

to him clearly what was expected of him, without me just passing this to him and saying, this is your project, just go and do it. By coming to the meetings, by talking to you, it just made it simpler for me, so I could understand it. Then I could explain it to him. The work you're doing in class, too, he seems to be understanding that" (P5/F).

Such confidence was gained by one interviewed mother who said, "I feel very good about that invisible line of doing the right thing. In terms of future in the role, I would really encourage [my daughter] that she and I continue to work that way, on major things like this. I think it's really valuable" (P7/F). Collaboration with the teacher-librarian did have an influence on one parent's view of parent assistance. She maintained:

I think it did. Like I said before, I always wondered if I did too much, but after this, I realize that it's you're sort of saying, it's good for the parent to work with the child. Sometimes you feel guilty that you've spent too much time helping him with this. But it sounds like from all this sort of thing, that it isn't. You're feeling, it's probably good I did help". (P6/F)

Six interviewed parents (75%) indicated that they gained confidence in how to be academically supportive. One interviewed father felt his child saw him in a new light, saying, "I don't think he realized his dad had any smarts" (P2/M). Similarly, 14 parents (64%) in the final questionnaire

commented that they felt more confident about and better equipped for helping their children with future projects.

The majority of the eight interviewed parents indicated that there was improved interaction with their children in working on the research projects together. Two parents (25%) mentioned that their training in assisting their grade seven child would be even more valuable in that it would also help the younger children in the family who would be coming up to grade seven eventually (P4/F and P8/F). One of them stated, "I think it [collaboration] is really positive. I have three other children coming along and the more skills I can learn, you know...I like the idea of collaboration because it's sometimes mystifying as a parent [to assist with an ERWP project], so when you have that link, I think it's really helpful" (P8/F). She also commented on the amount of guidance she felt grade seven children need, by saying "I do feel that as they have advanced in their grades, they need a lot of help as the work becomes more complicated...I think as they've gone along, we've had to give them more help, rather than diminishing" (P8/F).

One mother noticed the maturing process in her son made a difference to this year's research project, in that she was involved less and only when he deemed it necessary or valuable to him. She wrote, "This is the first time [my son] did not panic and ask me to be there every step of the way. It [the ERWP process] was a great learning experience for him and a

confidence builder. [He] does not feel so daunted by written assignments since he finished this project” (P5/F). Another parent felt that “after doing this [collaborating with the teacher-librarian], you’re wanting [to give] a lot of parent input. It’s enhancing the way they learn. I think it’s cementing even the procedure for doing research a little bit more, isn’t it?” (P6/F).

One parent felt that the research project had been much more successful for her daughter because “I’ve become involved. And again, because I’m aware of the steps to take. And I’m a lot more aware of the process. So it’s like educating yourself to help your kid. It’s quite good” (P8/F). She also mentioned that “it was good to be with other parents [at the meetings].” In her case, the benefits of increased interaction extended to other parents, not just to her child. In the final questionnaire, one parent commented that he/she felt more aware of both the demands placed on the child and the need of the child for assistance and that a PTL collaboration process made him/her feel more valued as a parent.

Parent’s Perspectives: Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process

The disadvantages were fewer in number than the benefits. Each interviewed parent experienced some measure of frustration in either following the assignment directions in the overview or attending a meeting on homework advice that did not completely meet their needs. Some parents

experienced frustration with communication gaps between home and school (P1/M, P2/M, and P4/F) and one parent (P1/M) found working with his child involved him in a greater degree of arguing than he would have liked. In the final questionnaire, no parents mentioned any specific disadvantages to a PTL collaboration process for themselves. One parent did think it unfair that not all parents had the benefit of a PTL collaboration process.

Table 4.8: Parent Perspective on the Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	<p>Frustration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ with insufficiencies in materials (overview, assignment instructions, research question criteria) ❑ with insufficiencies in training (meetings) ❑ with communication gaps ❑ with children's resistance to parent assistance
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Students' Perspectives: Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

From the composite and coded data, four major areas of benefits of a PTL collaboration process from the eight students' perspectives emerged. The following table outlines the main benefits perceived by the eight students.

Table 4.9: Student Perspective on the Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	<p>Useful adult support and guidance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent knowledgeable about project procedures 2. Kept student on task 3. Speeded up work 4. Met deadlines better 5. Discussed questions and gave suggestions 6. Made work easier, more interesting, more fun 7. Worked through more of the project
2	<p>Increased communication between parent and teacher-librarian</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent can e-mail teacher-librarian 2. Seeing parents involved with the teacher-librarian
3	<p>Made positive difference to learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased quality of work 2. Produced better question 3. More parent help with deciphering information 4. Parent help opened eyes to range of resources 5. Higher mark 6. Increased student interest in continuing with research
4	<p>Strengthened parent/child relationship</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spent more individual time with parent on quality activity 2. More opportunity to talk and get to know parent 3. Increased parental pride in student

From the students' perspectives, the main benefit was receiving useful adult support and guidance with completion of their research projects. All eight students affirmed that their parents made a difference to their achievement in their projects. Most of them mentioned how difficult it was to narrow the topic to something manageable and that their parents had helped them with this dilemma. All the students (100%) acknowledged that they came up with a better main question because they worked with their

parents, although two students (25%) said that the formulation took longer with parent help (S5/M and S8/F). In an interview, one student stated that “when I didn’t get something, she [mom] would tell me it and then I’d go, oh, maybe like this, and she’d give me a couple of answers and then I’d get the picture and then work on it for my own” (S3/M).

All the 72 students in grade seven were required to write thinking logs to increase reflection during the research process. One boy wrote in his thinking log of January 7, 1999:

I think what you are doing with the parents and the kids is a really good idea....Our parents probably know more about our topics than we do, so we can use them as references for help....In other projects I never got as much help and I found that this was a lot easier. I also found that me and my dad work well together. (S2/M)

One boy appreciated the fact that his mom could phone or e-mail the teacher for information. He wrote in his thinking log of March 10, 1999:

My mother would be there to help me because she would know what would have to be done and it would be easier when she was helping me because she would understand the concept of what had to be done and, just in case, she could phone or e-mail you [teacher-librarian] to find out more information, if she didn’t know what to do. (S3/M)

The students stated that they produced better questions, learned more easily and met deadlines better. One girl wrote in her thinking log of March 13, 1999:

I like your idea [teacher-librarian's] of having parent helpers. I don't know if my project would have been as good as it is. All in all, I really didn't think that the project was hard [but] for the exception of the interview [with an expert] and the topic search. I really enjoyed doing the project and would welcome another one anytime. (S7/F)

Another student affirmed that his parents made his learning "way easier. I don't think I would have done as well. I might have turned it in late because I don't think I would have had enough thinking, like two brains are better than one" (S4/M). In a thinking log written in December 1999, a student wrote that "I felt worried that I couldn't get my ERWP done on time, but once my mom and dad discussed [the research] questions, I was able to get it done easily" (S6/M). Four of the eight students remarked that their parents helped them throughout the project, not just in the finishing touches at the end (S1/M, S2/M, S4/M and S7/F). One student mentioned that "my mom helped me narrow it [research question] down" (S7/F).

Each interviewed student (100%) remarked that he/she thought the whole project was of higher quality because mom and/or dad gave that extra one-on-one help. Most thought their parents had helped speed up the task and

kept them on task. One girl said, "If I didn't have them there, it would have taken me at least a couple of days to formulate a research question. And it only took me about an hour with their help" (S8/F). Some said the task took longer because they had to talk and think about it more, but they were pleased with the quality of the resulting work.

One student stated he liked seeing his mom get more involved with the teacher-librarian and the project (S3/M), while one father mentioned that his son was "pretty proud now that you and I are talking" (P2/M). Likewise, a mother said, "I think he [my son] likes the fact that the parents talk to teachers. You're closer together. It makes the teacher easier for him to access, so that he feels more comfortable with. He knows that his parents know this teacher" (P6/F). A third parent said that her daughter "enjoyed the fact that I was, I think, involved a bit more. . We were trying to work around it together, instead of me saying to her, do your homework or else" (P8/F).

All eight students (100%) were emphatic in their belief that their parents made a positive difference to their learning and all were definite that there were more pluses than minuses to parent assistance. One boy wrote in his thinking log, dated March 10, 1999, " Over the last 3 months, it has been hard but fun. It is really good to spend so much time with my dad. I think this research will benefit me through the rest of my life" (S2/M). One girl noted, " As we were talking in the beginning about interest and experiences,

they gave me a boost on what to do. That was a help” (S8/F). One boy said that his dad helped him brainstorm ideas and helped decipher information that was difficult to read (S2/M) and another boy felt his parent had really opened his eyes to what resources on his topic were in the public library (S6/M).

Two students (25%) mentioned that they appreciated just having additional individual time with their parents at home (S2/M and S4/M). One boy, who has two younger siblings, mentioned how he enjoyed spending more individual time with his mom (S4/M). Another boy, who was researching his father’s near-fatal heart attack, was asked what was the best part of the experience. “ Spending time with my dad,” was his immediate reply (S2/M). One girl summed up two thoughts that appeared in many students' thinking logs, when she wrote, “I liked doing this project because my mom and I (mostly me) learned a lot. It is also a handy thing to know about when I go to high school.”

Students’ Perspectives: Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process

Table 4.10: Student Perspective on the Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	Getting into arguments with parents
2	Annoying repetition of assignment instructions by parents
3	Took longer to complete assignments

The disadvantages were very few in number. One student (S1/M) stated that he sometimes got into arguments with his parents and three students (S1/M, S7/F, and S8/F) sometimes felt so bombarded by their parents' ideas that they couldn't think clearly. One student (S6/M) found his mother's repetition of the assignment instructions really annoying. Although they stated they created better research questions with parent help, two students (S1/M and S5/M) found the task of question formulation took longer than if they had worked alone.

**Teacher-Librarian's Perspective:
Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process**

**Table 4.11: Teacher-Librarian Perspective on Teacher-Librarian
Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process**

1	<p>Improved professional practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfaction in creating collaboration that works <input type="checkbox"/> Parents and students more satisfied with library research program <input type="checkbox"/> Increased two-way communication with parents <input type="checkbox"/> Increased confidence in accepting parents' suggestions for improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Greater appreciation of parents' contributions to children's education <input type="checkbox"/> Better student monitoring for timely assignment completion <input type="checkbox"/> Better student research questions (easier to mark, higher quality)
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It is less time-consuming and easier for a teacher-librarian autocratically to tell a student directly what to do, without any parent involvement. However, it is much more fulfilling to assist a child and his parent(s) to learn to problem solve in a way that establishes a lifelong, useful

technique. This obviously takes a great deal more time and effort on the teacher-librarian's part, yet the main benefit for the teacher-librarian is improvement of her professional practice.

Table 4.12 outlines student benefits from the teacher-librarian's perspective of a PTL collaboration process. From the teacher-librarian's perspective, a main benefit of a PTL collaboration process for students was that students experienced more informed and individual support and guidance to work on a very challenging task at home.

Table 4.12: Teacher-Librarian Perspective on Student Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	More informed assistance from parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lessened anxiety in work time <input type="checkbox"/> Problems solved sooner (at home rather than later at school) <input type="checkbox"/> Increased academic success and confidence – produced better questions <input type="checkbox"/> More one-on-one support by better equipped parents <input type="checkbox"/> Drawn into wider range of sources of information <input type="checkbox"/> More help with deciphering information
2	More successful interaction with parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aware of advantages of brainstorming with parents <input type="checkbox"/> More opportunity to expand thinking

Since students were able to have dialogue with adults other than the teacher, they had more opportunity to reflect, think critically, and solve problems. As one parent said, "He has a resource at school which are you and

his teachers and he also has a resource at home. If he hits a snag, he doesn't have to wait until the next day [to see the teacher]" (P3/F).

The teacher-librarian was impressed by an original student poem called Confidence included in a project and thought it reflected the difference that PTL collaboration has made to students this year. The student spoke of the importance of having someone to run to for approval and how much confidence that kind of support gives.

Students' horizons were broadened by the expanded parent interaction. Two students (25%) mentioned that their parents drew them into a wider range of informational resources than they would have done alone (S4/M and S6/M). A parent (P2/M) mentioned that he helped his son decipher some of the more difficult vocabulary and concepts in the library resources that they found. A student (S7/F) spontaneously took the initiative to suggest that the eight students meet for a group interview with the teacher-librarian to give their input on the PTL collaboration process.

Students benefitted when parents became more fully involved in the student research process. Because of a PTL collaboration process, both the parents and the teacher-librarian became more caring of and closer to the children. In receiving that extra care, students likewise felt good about the expanded interaction with their parents. One student stated that his father was "following through, like, the whole project, instead of...just bits and

mainly at the end” (S2/M). Table 4.13 outlines the teacher-librarian’s perspective on the parent benefits of a PTL collaboration process.

Table 4.13: Teacher-Librarian Perspective on Parent Benefits of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	Satisfaction in caring more for their children
2	<p>Increased satisfaction with parent assistance in research homework at home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increased access to training and materials for parent use <input type="checkbox"/> Increased communication with teacher-librarian <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased anxiety during work time <input type="checkbox"/> Problems solved sooner with added training in parent assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to suggest changes or improvements to collaboration and research program

All eight interviewed parents found the 11-page overview and assignment descriptions very helpful. Knowing what was expected of the students allowed parents to quell anxieties that arose at home working with their children. Both the principal and colleagues at the grade seven level had previously given important feedback to the teacher-librarian on the overview draft document. Creation of the overview had taken a considerable amount of teacher time and invested effort and the teacher-librarian was committed to its potential usefulness for collaboration. In the end, use of a written overview resulted in the parents being more informed and that meant less anxiety for everybody in completing their assignments.

With increased parent/ teacher communication, problems were cleared up sooner and parents found it easier to make timely and useful suggestions for the school library research program. Discovering the usefulness of e-mail for parent/ teacher communication was a definite benefit in this collaboration. As one mother (P8/F) said, "That e-mail thing really helps".

**Teacher-Librarian's Perspective:
Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process**

Table 4.14: Teacher-Librarian Perspective on the Disadvantages of a PTL Collaboration Process

1	Amount of time involved to implement collaboration
2	Uncertainty whether time and effort worth the trouble

The disadvantages, outlined in Table 4.14, were very few in number, but critical to the success of a PTL collaboration process. They were mainly about the amount of time needed for preparation of meetings, materials and the extra communication for collaboration, in addition to all other professional tasks, and the uncertainty whether the time invested was worth the trouble. The time commitment is a serious consideration of a PTL collaboration process.

Research Question Five: Do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process?

It is clear from examining the tables of benefits and disadvantages for parents, students and teacher-librarian that the number of benefits far outweighs the number of disadvantages in a PTL collaboration process. The main benefits are (a) increased learning and guidance for all participants, and (b) enhanced student, parent and teacher well-being, and (c) stronger interpersonal relationships through more effective communication.

On the whole, parents became better equipped as guides for their children and the children responded positively to the new kind of help they received. Through a PTL collaboration process, the confidence of students, parents and teacher-librarian was increased and the dilemma of balancing student desire for independence with the parent offer of help was opened up for discussion. Parents did become clearer about what was the right kind of parental assistance for their children.

The small number of disadvantages centred on the uncertainties that naturally arise when people work collaboratively on projects for the first time and are unsure of outcomes. It is important that strategies be in place to resolve or lessen as much as possible any disadvantages in the future PTL collaboration process. It became evident that students needed more help with learning how to guide dialogue about research with their parents at home.

Researchers and educators must continue to develop the abilities of students, parents, schools and communities to share responsibility for children's learning (Connors & Epstein, 1995, p. 443) and parents and teachers should not be daunted by the presence of small frustrations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This action research study, exploratory and descriptive in nature, was intended to gain insight into a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process in a school library research program for grade seven students, to theorize whether it merited continuance, and if continued, what changes, if any, could be implemented in order to improve the PTL collaboration process. The five research questions, first posed in Chapter I, provided a basis for examining a new approach to parent involvement in the library research program. The study was conducted during the 1998/1999 school year in a Lower Mainland elementary school situated in a very stable, middle class neighbourhood with well-educated parents. There were three classes of grade seven students (72 students in total) and all the children were fluent English speakers.

All parents of the grade seven students were invited to be part of the study and were mailed questionnaires accompanied by an overview of the grade seven library research process. The questionnaires were completed by 40 (55%) of the parents and 28 parents of the 72 students (39%) were able to commit time to be subjects in the study and work with their children at home

on students' topic exploration and question formulation assignments. Following two in-depth parent training/ information meetings, a subset of eight of the 28 parents in the study and their corresponding eight children agreed to be studied more closely as they worked together on topic exploration and research question formulation assignments. After completion of the grade seven research projects in March 1999, the parents and teacher-librarian discussed in detail the process of parent assistance. Following this, they created guidelines in an attempt to (a) find resolutions to the concerns of parents, students and herself that had emerged during the PTL collaboration process, and (b) benefit future parents working with their children at home. Just before the school year began again, a final questionnaire to evaluate the PTL collaboration process was mailed in August to the 28 parents who had been in the study and the results from 22 parents (79%) were similar to the views presented by the eight parents and students who were the primary subjects in the study.

This study of a qualitative survey design, which analyzed parent involvement in a Lower Mainland elementary school, has limited generalizability, that is, to a similar middle class urban population of fluent English speakers. If it is to be utilized in other settings, a study of this kind will have to take into account the natural variation in characteristics of teachers, students, families, schools, and classrooms (Epstein, 1982). Several

factors contributed to the limitations. Firstly, the subjects in the study were restricted to volunteers who had available time to participate. Thus, the selection of subjects formed a convenience, rather than a random sample. The number of subjects in the sample was further limited by students who did not require parent assistance as they were already confident, independent learners, and by parents who had sufficient friction in homework relationships with their children that they chose not to engage in the required task. Secondly, since the parents and students worked at home and not in the presence of the researcher, reported interactions had to be relied upon, rather than direct observations by the teacher-librarian. Thirdly, the study was context-bound to the parents in a particular school setting and a particular teacher-librarian's practice.

The discussion of the findings, presented in order of the five research questions, will centre on the emergent concerns and subsequent solutions addressed jointly by the parents and teacher-librarian. Because concerns and resolutions are closely related, the first two research questions will be discussed together. For similar reasons, research questions four and five will be combined into one section. Following the discussion, a set of conclusions will be presented followed by implications for teacher-librarians. Recommendations for further research and a final reflection complete the thesis.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Questions One and Two: What major concerns do the students, parents and teacher-librarian have about a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process for parent assistance? To which major concerns are there immediate or potential resolutions?

One aim of this study was to encourage parents to air concerns during the PTL collaboration process, and for the teacher-librarian to make some gains in finding solutions with parents. Of the five major concerns that emerged in the PTL collaboration process, three of them were common to parents, students and the teacher-librarian, one concern was shared by parents and the teacher-librarian, while one was solely the teacher-librarian's concern (see Table 4.2). While some concerns require more time and research to reach successful resolutions, most concerns were resolved in ways that are likely to be successful with the new 1999/2000 group of grade seven students and their parents.

Concern 1:

Anxiety about Difficulty and Scope of Student Projects

This concern was precipitated by the teacher-librarian's delivery to parents of a lengthy overview at the beginning of the research projects.

Fortunately, the teacher-librarian further clarified the procedures and parameters of the project at the parent meetings and this alleviated some of the parents' trauma. As one parent (P5/F) stated "...when I first read it I thought, oh, man, this you do in university, not grade seven. But, in talking to you, I realized that it's something you can scale down to this level."

In creating guidelines for future parent involvement near the end of the study, both the parents and the teacher-librarian were much more relaxed and open than they were in the initial stages. A mother, silent in the initial parent meetings, spoke up clearly in the guidelines meeting later on. She stated that after receiving the overview and questionnaire in the mail at the beginning of the study, she was so concerned about the difficulty of the student research project, she wondered if she would be capable of managing it, let alone her daughter. She thought that a research process should not be made so hard that a parent feels she cannot do grade seven student work. After working with her daughter, however, she felt that the research process was worthwhile and quite within both their capabilities. This concern was also dissipated by virtue of the great majority of students finding, upon finishing their projects, that the demands of the projects were quite within their capabilities. Reducing the number of details in the overview of the research process given to parents should lessen anxiety about the scope and difficulty of the student research projects.

Concern 2:**Gaining Sufficient Information and Direction to Work Effectively****The teacher-librarian's instructions and overview.**

The teacher-librarian's decision to deliberately involve parents and sufficiently inform them about the grade seven research process was based on educational research information that (a) students achieve more with support from home, and (b) as curriculum becomes more complex, parents want information and assistance from the school to help them with homework (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

One parent in the study (P8/F) noted as the complexity of assignments had increased through the grades, her daughter had greater need for her parental guidance with homework. Epstein maintains "particularly in middle and high school grades, students need encouragement to take challenges, persist in difficult work, deal with failure as well as success, and understand the importance of hard work in school. Families who receive information in useful forms can help schools help students reach these goals" (Epstein, 1992b, p. 10).

One parent expressed concern about the depth and clarity of teacher instructions given to students about their projects, stating that while the research program in the library was useful and parent participation crucial for the success of it, he hoped students would receive an extensive explanation

of the process and objectives of the program. While research confirms that parents depend very much on the leadership of teachers to provide them with information and training that will make them knowledgeable guides for their children, it appears they also depend on the teacher taking responsibility for thorough student instruction.

When parents and children actually worked together, there was still a concern about the criteria of narrowing topics to something manageable. Interviewed parents indicated the classroom instruction in the criteria for question formulation was thorough. This partly relieved their anxieties about having enough knowledge and training to help their children cope with their research assignments. As it was probable that the teacher-librarian may not have given enough training to parents and students about this matter, having the teacher-librarian increase the instructions and materials about research question formulation for both parents and students should lessen the concern about creating narrow enough topics.

While the parents helping their children with research homework in earlier grades gained some knowledge of the research process, the findings indicate that parents were eager to receive further information and strategies that would make their roles as guides for their grade seven children easier and more effective. With that purpose in mind, the teacher-librarian mailed out to the parents an overview and description of the 12 assignments the

students would be completing in their research projects. The overview reviewed the research process taught from grades one to six, explained the format and purpose of student thinking logs and introduced the importance of critical thinking and interview technique in the grade seven research process. The overview of the grade seven research process was considered very informative by the parents in both questionnaires in the study (see Appendix A).

What was missed by the teacher-librarian about the delivery of useful information was that a little is better than a lot (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989) and that confusing educational terms are to be avoided if clear communication is a goal (Rasmussen, 1998). While research indicates that orientation/training activities are beneficial, giving too much information at once can overtax parents' willingness to stay involved. This applies to the overview as well and the teacher-librarian believes the timing of delivering a lengthy, detailed overview to parents and students before the projects actually began, may have created the wrong impression for parents and students. The subsequent parent/student concern about the potential difficulty and scope of the projects was a direct result of the teacher-librarian's timing of the overview delivery.

It was evident that receiving a very detailed overview before working with their children caused considerable concern for parents and students

alike. The resolution of this concern, set within the guidelines for parent involvement in the future, would be the delivery of a short overview before parents worked with their children. As each assignment comes up in the course of the projects, there would be a set of very detailed assignment instructions for parent/student use.

The parent training meetings.

In order for desirable educational and instructional outcomes to occur, Sanchez and Baguedano (1993) argue that well-designed and well-implemented training for parents is required. Considering their findings, it can be said, although the first parent meeting on critical thinking and research question criteria was the right length, style and content, the second meeting needed changes in choice of speaker and structure, in order to meet parent needs.

Researchers have found that teachers need to have clear and easy-to-use materials in order to prove quickly to parents that they can help. "Special assistance to build and maintain confidence of parents with children in the upper-elementary grades is especially important" (Epstein, 1986, p. 292). Well-structured training meetings and well-prepared handouts should satisfy the parental need for useful information, especially the parents of early adolescents.

Concern 3:
The Right Kind of Assistance

Student desire for independence and the parent offer of help.

Many parents and students in the study viewed the student desire for independence and the parent desire to help as a dilemma. In contrast, Epstein (1983) contends that students become more independent, if their parents remain informed and involved in their education.

While the 12 and 13-year-old students' simultaneous need for both greater independence in their learning and continued guidance or supervision is characteristic for this age, this seeming dilemma, if it is unsolved, has serious implications for school-family partnerships. An initial teacher-librarian concern in the study was the potential decrease in student responsibility, if, by increasing parent involvement, parents assumed too much responsibility for students' assignments. According to Joyce Epstein, this mainly happens when parents do not have a good understanding of what the teacher expects. But, parents can guide and support their children without doing the work for them, if the teacher's policies and patterns of homework assignments are clear to the parents (Epstein cited in Brandt, 1989).

In the questionnaires and interviews, it was quite evident that parents wanted clear policies from the teacher-librarian about assistance at home and

wanted to give the right kind of assistance that did not diminish their children's responsibilities for their homework. In collaboration with parents, the teacher-librarian created clear policies to guide parent assistance in learning activities in the future and thereby help students see that these seemingly contradictory pressures can coexist.

Whether parents would take over their children's work was an initial teacher-librarian concern that did not really materialize in the study. The teacher-librarian worried that parents might be offended, if she mentioned that this kind of detrimental parent involvement could take place. To the contrary, the findings showed the interviewed parents were quite easy and open about discussing the possibilities of parental dominance and were just as concerned that parents doing the projects for their children was the wrong kind of help.

The issue of student independence versus parent assistance was raised by a number of students and parents during the interviews. The interviewed parents indicated that they would reduce involvement, if it interfered with the development of their children's independence. Fortunately, the majority of the parents said they managed to strike to the right balance, by respecting their children's right to think critically and make their own decisions and yet offering support, mainly in the form of useful dialogue. One parent stated "...he [my son] does want to do it on his own, not relying on me to give him

all the answers. That makes me feel that I have succeeded teaching him independence, you know, to do his own work and not rely on me to be doing the projects for him.... If he'd give me the [research] question, then I'd say, does it meet this, this, this, [criteria] and then he'd look at it and rework it again. It's not like I said the question should say. He did it on his own by me asking him questions " (P5/F).

When interviewed, all the children of these parents said they enjoyed working with their parents. One student did say that she found their ideas sometimes came too thick and fast and that she needed greater thinking space to absorb everything (S8/F).

What was of interest to the teacher-librarian was that the achieved balance of parent offer of help with the student's desire for independence varied in the eight interviewed parent/child pairs. Although it seemed to be a very individual decision as to what constituted a satisfactory balance, parents unanimously agreed that students should complete the written work of the projects.

Some interviewed parents did find a certain amount of resistance to their offer of help. In some cases, just the parent was troubled, and in other cases, the child expressed more concern. The final questionnaire data (62% of the parents) clearly indicated that parents still see the achievement of a balance between student desire for independence and parent guidance as a

dilemma. It may be that students had received mixed messages from their classroom teachers who emphasized the importance of independence and student responsibility for homework in grade seven. Having students and parents clearly understand that independent learning does not mean that students do the research projects alone, but rather, it means students take charge of their projects, make the final decisions and seek guidance and support when needed. This may partially solve this outstanding concern in the future. However, this matter may be more complex than it appears at present and may need much more thorough examination in future.

Research confirms that parents need to be careful so that “pressure on the child is not increased by emotional or unenlightened parent involvement when the goal is to help the child and thereby lighten pressure placed upon him” (Epstein & Becker, 1982, p.105). The findings in this study showed that the majority of the interviewed parents helped their children without causing too much tension and without intruding upon the ownership the students felt for their projects. Parents seemed very conscientious about providing just the right kind of assistance and not taking over the projects. Some parents remarked on how much they had personally learned in working as co-learners in the projects and the majority of students produced projects of which they were very proud. In the final questionnaire the majority of parents (86%) indicated their children worked cooperatively with them and

91% of parents reported that working with their children was satisfying and worthwhile.

Of the primary subjects in the study, one father was involved in a kind of power struggle with his child (P1/M). His very capable and intellectual son had difficulty completing many of the assignments and attending meetings set up by the teacher-librarian. He chose a research question that was challenging and, in the end, was not easily researchable. He had an almost insurmountable difficulty with finding an interviewee and, with the teacher-librarian's efforts, he finally completed that portion of the research. Writing thinking logs that would communicate his feelings to the teacher-librarian was completely avoided by this student. He seemed to distance himself from any of the problems he encountered with the research project. His classroom teachers reported he was not always responsible about handing in work on time, but, often the completed work was of a very high quality. A fact worth mentioning is that this student arrived only two years ago from another culture, another continent and another language and, in spite of this, has made incredible advances in his learning. He is a very mature boy and a wonderful thinker. He is able to synthesize what he has read and write profoundly at times. Last year he was tested for giftedness because he produced work of such high quality. Although not designated as gifted, but he did very well in the testing. Being the child of immigrants,

being an adolescent, and being mature for his age may be factors that sparked the resistance with his parents in working together at home. When asked what he liked best about working with his mother and father, he replied, “Well, it got me to know their point of views and that was really interesting”.

It is not clear how this student viewed his responsibility in working with his parents in learning activities at home and it may be that students need to play a more central role in the parent/ teacher partnership. Students are responsible for their own education, but they can be helped in their attainments by their schools and families. They might benefit from more teacher-librarian/ student discussion about their important role and responsibilities in working with their parents. Findings indicated that students do need to be helped to dialogue with their parents, so they maintain ownership of the projects. A three-way collaborative partnership of parent, teacher and child would be worth investigating.

One parent in the final questionnaire raised an ethical concern. He/she thought it was not fair that the children receiving parent help had advantages over other children who were not, and suggested the elimination of parental help to all children. A more positive recommendation encourages all parents to support their children in their homework activities, after receiving training freely available for every parent. Epstein (cited in Fullan, 1991) maintains that only 1% of parents are unreachable. In addition,

research indicates that homework assignments that involve parents may maximize learning and that well-constructed collaborative assignments will be seen positively by parents (Epstein, 1982).

Concern 4:
Gaps in Communication

Research shows that programs of school and family connections in the middle grades [grades 5-9] will fail unless the early adolescents understand, accept, and participate in the partnerships designed to assist them to be more successful in school (Epstein & Connors, 1995, p. 142). The questionnaire responses and interviews indicated that parents had no difficulty with two-way communication with the teacher-librarian, but there were some communication gaps that occurred mainly when students did not get notices home to the parents or parents had to miss meetings. Often the messengers or liaisons between home and school, students can make a difference to the effectiveness of home-school communication during collaboration. All eight students in the study accepted the responsibility of participating, but two of the eight (S1/M and S4/M) did not take responsibility for communicating between their parents and the teacher-librarian.

Parent/ teacher-librarian communication through e-mail messages was well received by many parents in the study and noted by many parents in the final questionnaire. Those parents who made use of it found it invaluable and convenient. One parent commented, "It is nice to have an avenue, too, where I don't have to disturb you or disrupt you. I can put a thought on there, if I felt I needed to" (P4/F).

The potential resolution to gaps in communication between parent and teacher-librarian will be to eliminate unfamiliar terms wherever possible and to continue refining the two-way communication procedures by encouraging more e-mail messages, adding voice mail, and including a home-school communication section at the end of each assignment instruction sheet (see Appendix E). A format similar to one used by TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) created by Epstein, Jackson, and Salinas (1992, p. 9) would be appropriate. TIPS Interactive Homework is a process that keeps families informed about and involved in their children's learning. The creators of TIPS emphasize that homework is the student's responsibility. The interactive activities require students to show, share, gather reactions, and interact in other ways with their family members. In response, parents play supportive roles in discussing homework with their children. All TIPS activities include a section for home-to-school communication that enables parents to relay comments on whether they

enjoyed the activities and whether they learned something about what the student is learning in class (Davies, 1996, p. 10). Increasing two-way communication with techniques like e-mail, voice mail, and a section on the student instruction sheets, should give parents the opportunities to suggest improvements and vent frustrations before anxieties increase to crisis levels. The use of e-mail could be expanded to parents communicating with other parents about the research process.

There is a limited resolution to the parent/child communication gaps, as students did not express concern about them. Students could be instructed by the teacher-librarian as to their central role as messengers in a parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process, thus, placing responsibility directly on students for the success of the communication.

Concern 5:
Teacher-Librarian Fears

The teacher-librarian was initially reluctant to get involved with parents for fear they would take over their children's responsibility for their projects. She also anticipated having to cope with increased parent criticism of the library research program. Fortunately, her need to improve the research program superseded her anticipation of problems with engaging parents in a new process.

As it turned out, the teacher-librarian's fear of parent criticism was not realized, as responses in the final questionnaire indicated parents were satisfied with their interaction with the teacher-librarian. The results were more positive than she anticipated. By making a PTL collaboration process part of a formal research study, it has confirmed the teacher-librarian's belief that parents need to be an active part of the learning community.

Research Question Three: What teacher-librarian techniques best facilitate a PTL collaboration process and parent assistance in students' question formulation?

There are some techniques that are key to collaborating with parents (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989), and, in this study, some were more successful than others. This is to be expected when a new collaboration process is begun. The creation of an overview with detailed assignment descriptions, well-structured parent training sessions, and the provision of many options for parent/teacher-librarian communication were definitely successful techniques.

The overview and the detailed description of the twelve assignments were necessary for both parents and their children. However, parents would definitely be more accepting of a little information at once, rather than a lot. This would reduce their anxieties. It must be kept in mind, however, that at

the beginning of any new project, there is often a natural uncertainty about successful completion of tasks.

Guidelines for Future Parent Involvement

The technique that produced the most far-reaching results was the formulation of guidelines for future parent involvement. This put the improvements and changes suggested by parents, students and the teacher-librarian into a written document that could be publicly acknowledged by present and future participants in the PTL collaboration process. Before finalizing the guidelines, the teacher-librarian sought further feedback and consensus from the parents, in order to ensure the validity of the concerns expressed in the guidelines.

The creation of the guidelines set in motion the process of resolving the complexity of the initial overview and resulted in a suggestion for better delivery of information to parents. It was decided that delivery of the details about assignments should be delayed, until students actually had to work on them. A very detailed sheet of clear instructions to supplement the classroom instruction of each assignment would be sent home, one assignment at a time. In order to enhance parent and student willingness to work together on research homework, a two-page simplified overview and assignment schedule would be given, along with a brief sheet of the guidelines for parents working with their children at home. The parents and teacher-

librarian also recommended that the video of the class instruction should be available for parent use.

By jointly formulating guidelines with the parents, the teacher-librarian allowed the parent changes to be implemented, thus, improving the future PTL collaboration process. Parents suggested that concise training meetings with humour and small group work are best. Using the technique of small group work in the first meeting, where parents were able to talk intimately to one another, enhanced collaboration by building the confidence of the parents to speak out and comfortably share ideas. Parents said they enjoyed learning about critical thinking by talking in small groups about the quality of a good thinker.

Research Questions Four and Five: What are the benefits and disadvantages of a PTL collaboration process in a library research program at the grade seven level for parents, students and teacher-librarian? Do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process?

This study of teacher-librarian/ parent collaboration bears out what Davies states, "...that if strategies for collaboration are well planned, aimed at appropriate goals, and well implemented, they can have many benefits. Children's chances for success in school and life are likely to be improved.

Their parents and other family members can also gain skills, knowledge, and confidence” (Davies, 1996, p. 1). Another result is that the teacher-librarian can also gain skills, knowledge, and confidence, if she is willing to accept constructive criticism from parents.

In this study, the students, parents and the teacher-librarian indicated they were satisfied with the results of a PTL collaboration process. Parents felt they had been treated fairly throughout the collaboration and the majority of parents’ impressions of collaboration and assistance with question formulation were positive. One parent summed it up in the final questionnaire by commenting that he/she was now more confident, more positive about his/her contributions and more valued as a parent. Students seemed to expand their thinking about the research when parents helped with question formulation homework. The teacher-librarian saw indications that there was improved parental self-image after parents successfully worked with their children and cooperated with her.

There are potential benefits, but there are also potential problems, with any parent-involvement process (Epstein, 1995). The few problems that parents and students encountered in working with question formulation with their children were understandable. Narrowing the question to something manageable for grade seven students took a great deal of thinking, dialogue and negotiation. The children’s complaints that they were bombarded with

parental ideas could be a matter of personalities, but more likely are the results of the over-enthusiasm of the parents and lack of consideration for their children's need for thinking space. Although contrarily anticipated by the teacher-librarian, parents seemed to be very concerned about the homework being their children's responsibility and not assuming the homework role for their children. Only one set of parents met with considerable resistance from their child when they set out to assist.

At the beginning of the study, anxiety was high among parents as there was no precedent for this kind of collaboration and there was the possibility that parents would not be willing to continue to collaborate. At the study proceeded, anxiety was diminished through successful teacher-librarian techniques that facilitated collaboration and the assistance parents gave to their children at home. With the guidelines for parent involvement in place, anxiety and concerns should be further reduced and benefits increased. It is hoped that parent/ teacher collaboration in learning activities at home could be organized so the activities will become as familiar as the traditional meet-the-teacher night and parent/ teacher conferences.

Summary of the Discussion

Researchers suggest that, of all types of parent involvement, supervision of learning activities at home may be the most educationally

significant. The literature supports the tenet that a collaborative sharing of information between parents and teachers is needed in our complex, changing world (Connors & Epstein, 1995, p. 440). With the supporting structure of a parent/ teacher collaboration process attached to learning activities at home, parent confidence about guiding children is increased, the students can see positive results in learning, and a school library research program can thereby be strengthened. As Epstein points out, the main reason to create parent/ teacher partnerships is "to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students, and begins its work" (1995, p. 701).

A true partnership suggests an acceptance of each individual's skills and expertise, an open-minded sharing of knowledge, skills and experience, and a sense that each partner brings something different but of equal value to the relationship (Kasting, 1991, p. 35). According to Epstein, progress in partnerships is incremental, including more families each year in ways that benefit more students. She adds that the development of a partnership is a process and is careful to point out that "...not all activities will succeed with all families. But with good planning, thoughtful implementation, well-designed activities, and pointed improvements, more and more families and teachers can learn to work with one another on behalf of the children whose

interests they share” (Epstein, 1995, p. 710). The focus of research on parent involvement in the 1990s has been clearly on partnerships and shared responsibilities (Davies, 1996, p. 17) and the PTL collaboration process in this study has followed this trend.

Key components for a strong PTL collaboration process that emerged from the findings include: (a) genuine collaboration, (b) forums for airing concerns, (c) a format for solutions, (d) curriculum strength (e) successful facilitation techniques, and (f) clear goals. Analysis of the data revealed that a PTL collaboration process provided an effective context for parents and the teacher-librarian to interact in authentic and meaningful ways. The teacher-librarian sought to establish an equal and reciprocal partnership with parents in which they learned from each other by sharing their insights and experiences. The respectful tone in the parents’ comments in the final questionnaire was connected to the fair treatment they acknowledged they received from the teacher-librarian throughout the study.

The parents, after a period of initial shyness, discussed concerns easily and stated they felt treated fairly throughout the collaboration. Students were invited to write about their concerns in their thinking logs. The teacher-librarian wanted to emphasize to them the importance of reflection in the research process and, to a degree, the thinking logs provided that opportunity to reflect. By allowing students to vent their frustrations,

express confusion and record successes with assignments, teachers were also alerted to any problems they had not anticipated.

By synthesizing their ideas to create the guidelines at the end of the study, the parents and the teacher-librarian jointly reviewed their similar and different concerns and resolved concerns where possible. Because they had begun a mutually respectful partnership in which they shared in the decision-making, their goals were more defined and attainable. A PTL collaboration process has led to the creation of clearer policies for parent assistance, so students will retain their independence and responsibility for their work, but can seek and welcome parent assistance when needed. Policies and collaboration alone do not provide complete solutions for achieving the balance between student independence and parent assistance, but they do provide helpful adjustments at this stage. More reflection will be needed to develop finer techniques that will result in more sound solutions to this complex issue.

Previous to a PTL collaboration process, the well-established research process in the library program had been built on sound pedagogy and consensus. The most effective activities and approaches in a PTL collaboration process have been investigated and documented in this study, so that it is likewise built on shared meanings and consensus. The features

that proved most important to this trial period of a PTL collaboration process were: (a) well-designed materials for parents and students to use, (b) adequate training in parent assistance strategies, (c) attitudes of mutual respect among students, parents and the teacher-librarian, (d) solid two-way communication between parents and teacher-librarian, and (e) pre-set availability of the teacher-librarian to students and parents alike.

Overall, the findings indicate a general consensus reflecting satisfaction with a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process in a school library research program. The teacher-librarian has improved her understanding of the many techniques that facilitate collaboration, thereby increasing the benefits of parent assistance to students. The results suggest the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages of time constraints and anxieties inherent in being part of a collaborative partnership. Possibly, the greatest benefit was stated by a parent, when she said:

If every parent had this experience, all I can think of is, look at how this could change kids' lives and with their education... wouldn't this be good, instead of going out in the world, thinking you have to do everything alone....This was so fruitful. (P7/F)

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

Five research questions formed the basis for the study:

1. What major concerns of the students, parents, and teacher-librarian are expressed during a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process?
2. To which major concerns are there immediate or potential solutions?
3. What teacher-librarian techniques best facilitate a PTL collaboration process and parent assistance in students' research question formulations?
4. What are the benefits and disadvantages of a PTL collaboration process for the students, parents, and teacher-librarian?
5. Do the benefits for the students, parents, and teacher-librarian outweigh the disadvantages?

From analysis of the findings by the teacher-librarian, who was also the researcher in the study, the following seven conclusions are presented:

1. The initial concerns exhibited by parents and students about the difficulty of the grade seven student research projects were resolved through structured parent training in the research process and greater home-school communication with the teacher-librarian.

The grade seven school library research program is a challenging curriculum with enquiry-based learning at its core. Although parents and students were familiar with the research process from previous grades, this new approach was unfamiliar to the parents and students and created a high degree of anxiety. Because there were no readily-available, commercially-prepared materials, as in other subjects like math, the only source of directions for the students and training for the parents was teacher-prepared materials.

Implication: To successfully involve parents as guides for their children doing research homework, teacher-librarians must provide training in which there are valuable materials for parent use, so that parents can become better informed about how to help. The method of delivering the training and information to the parents and students must be carefully considered, if a PTL collaboration process is to prove successful. If the teacher-librarian's overview with assignment instructions is to be used as a parent training manual, then it must be organized so that parents are not initially overwhelmed by the details contained within. To start the PTL collaboration process, teacher-librarians should introduce briefer overviews and then ensure that individual assignment sheets which follow are detailed

enough to inform parents fully. It would be wise to obtain input from two or three parents before distributing such materials to all parents.

To help parents quickly see the difficulty and scope of the student research projects in future, teacher-librarians should make available copies of student projects and individual assignments for parents' and students' perusal. Opportunities to see completed research projects from other years would be helpful to many parents who need to see the big picture first.

2. Once parents realized that their concern about sufficient training and materials would be addressed, they responded enthusiastically to learning how to help their children, they became better equipped to give sensitive guidance, and their confidence levels rose.

Parents want to help their children succeed with their research assignments at home, but are concerned about how to get sufficient training and enough information to fully comprehend the research process at the grade seven level and help effectively. The parents had been confused previously as to how to help their children with their projects, but with two training sessions, discussions and written materials, it became much clearer to them. The important concept of student ownership of projects was discussed and understood.

Implication: Teacher-librarians must be aware that building parent confidence through a PTL collaboration process will lead to more parent willingness to guide children with future research projects. To increase parent confidence, teacher-librarians need to provide well-prepared training sessions and materials.

Since information and training were very important for understanding major concepts of the grade seven research process, teacher-librarians could repeat parent training meetings on other nights for parents who were unable to attend, or provide a video of meetings and teacher-librarian's student instruction for parents to view at their convenience. Parents indicated they felt more comfortable being able to talk with other parents and then later to the teacher about concerns, hence, teacher-librarians should structure meetings that meet this requirement. In the study, parents indicated they appreciated the handouts as a supplement to the training.

3. Parents expressed concern about how to balance their offer of adult learning support with their children's growing sense of independence. Collaboratively developed guidelines helped parents resolve this concern to their own satisfaction.

It was clear that a PTL collaboration process resulted in a very definite bonding effect between the parents and the students as well as between the parents and the teacher-librarian. The collaboration process contributed to a very definite improvement in the quality of the student projects and reinforced the concept that the research process, once mastered, would be useful to them for the rest of their lives.

Lack of clear policies about students' desire for independence versus the acceptance of parent help contributed to 12 of the 22 parents in the final questionnaire perceiving this issue as a dilemma. In future, if parent assistance and student independence can be satisfactorily reconciled with clearer policies and understandings at the outset, then that adjustment is surely a central benefit of a PTL collaboration process, since the students' own work would be legitimized by this process of mutual support between parent and child (Epstein, 1996, p. 46).

In the guidelines for future parent involvement, the parents and teacher-librarian collaboratively set a policy for the right kind of assistance as a future improvement. The policy was broad enough to accommodate the wide spectrum of opinion about what constitutes the right kind of assistance. This could potentially relieve the uncertainty that parents may have at the beginning of the program and yet be flexible enough to allow for parental range of opinions about the right kind of assistance.

Implication: Teacher-librarians need to make it clear to students that they are in charge of their projects, but are expected to talk over their work with their parents and guide that dialogue. Teacher-librarians must clarify to students what independent learning means. If policies and assignment instructions are clear to parents and students, the dilemma of student independence versus the parent offer of help will be decreased. While being independent, students need to understand that (a) parents want to know what their children are learning, (b) communicating and sharing with parents what is learned in class improves students' own understanding, and (c) the teacher-librarian wants parents to know how students are increasing their knowledge of the research process and preparing for the future (Epstein, Salina, & Jackson, 1995).

4. It is evident that there is a direct relationship between the ease of parent/teacher-librarian communication and the ultimate success of a PTL collaboration process.

Keeping the lines of communication open between home and school is a most important technique in a PTL collaboration process. Since the success of a PTL collaboration process is so reliant on effective communication, the few communication gaps in the PTL collaboration

process frustrated the parents involved. To resolve this frustration, it is critical that a variety of communication options be provided to participants in a PTL collaboration process.

Implication: Teacher-librarians should make every effort to organize efficacious two-way communication through e-mail, voice mail, handwritten notes, telephone calls, and space for parent comments on students' assignment sheets. Parents without e-mail access might appreciate using parent/teacher-librarian dialogue journals or using handouts with some often asked parent questions with appropriate responses. Removing unfamiliar terms from documents to be read by parents is essential, if teacher-librarians wish to communicate clearly and comfortably with parents. To make sure parents do not miss important information from the school, students need to be encouraged to assist with communication between parents and teachers and increase their responsibilities for their own learning and development (Connors & Epstein, 1995).

5. When parents perceived that their ideas were respected and valued, they willingly suggested important and useful changes. The technique of creating guidelines for future parent involvement, in which parents have

input, adds to the success of a PTL collaboration process and ultimately strengthens a school library research program.

The inclusion of a procedure for jointly creating guidelines for parent involvement has led to the solutions to many concerns. Not being a parent herself, the teacher-librarian welcomed suggestions/improvements to the research program and collaboration process. She has made changes to her techniques that she might not have considered otherwise. One example would be the setting of teacher-librarian "office hours" (see Appendix D). When parents experience difficulty while working with their children at home, the technique of having set office hours after school on a permanent basis is helpful for everyone concerned.

Implication: Teacher-librarians should welcome parent and student suggestions for improvement. On each assignment instruction sheet for students, a space for parent signature and comments could be provided to encourage two-way communication. There should be opportunity for parents to make suggestions and changes in the parent-involvement technique (Epstein, 1986, p. 292) and this section of the assignment sheet will make this possible for every parent to contribute. In this way, the school also shows respect for parents' perspectives.

Receiving a much shorter overview of research process will still inform parents, but may also encourage more willingness to participate in a PTL collaboration process. When the children actually complete the research tasks at home with parent assistance, detailed written assignment instructions will increase parent/ child communication and understanding of the tasks set by the teacher-librarian. Some parents were clearly intimidated by the specialized language in the overview document in this study, but this is preventable with forethought by the teacher-librarian. Guidelines for future parent involvement should be free of unfamiliar teacher terms and be updated yearly, allowing for continuous improvement by all concerned with the student research process. A smoother collaboration process will reduce participants' anxieties and remove some of the psychological stress that can come with parents and children working together academically at home (Epstein, 1982).

6. Because the PTL collaboration process was successful, students benefitted by receiving more effective adult support and guidance with their research assignments at home and this improved the quality of their work. Parents recognized an unexpected benefit of their learning; the process would assist their younger children to become successful at an earlier stage.

A PTL collaboration process did increase the well-being of participants, and, in many cases, interpersonal relationships and confidence in learning were strengthened. The interviewed students were proud of their work with their parents and indicated their projects were of better quality with parent input.

Implication: Teacher-librarians should continue to collaborate with parents in school library research programs and improve the techniques that facilitate a PTL collaboration process and parent assistance, so as to increase the quality of student learning. Parents with younger children could be reminded that their role as more informed guides brings an even greater benefit to them and their families.

7. Findings of the study strongly indicate that the many benefits to students, parents and the teacher-librarian of a PTL collaboration process clearly outweigh the few disadvantages, most of which can be eliminated with better planning and instruction.

Although collaboration with parents adds time to the teacher-librarian's teaching load, it is worth continuing, if the satisfaction of parents, students and teacher-librarian persists and learning is enhanced. Parents indicated

that collaboration eased parental assistance in instructional activities at home and students perceived parental assistance positively. All interviewed students specified there were definitely more pluses than minuses in working with their parents on research question formulation.

Implication: Teacher-librarians must work toward eliminating barriers to effective collaboration with parents in the future. Training sessions and materials must be carefully structured and delivered and effective communication must be made paramount in a PTL collaboration process.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a number of important areas in need of further research. First, the field of family and school partnerships, of which this study is a part, would benefit from more studies which investigate those situations where participants engage in critical reflection in a collaboration process. Understanding the perspectives of others is a precondition for developing shared understandings so important in partnerships.

Second, the change that the teacher-librarian's role undergoes during PTL collaboration and the parents' views on those changes before and after they engage collaboratively with her, need further investigation. The teacher-

librarian in this study had to modify her teaching role in order to manage this new collaboration with parents. Epstein has noted that “the teacher shares a portion of the teaching authority when parents are given materials and instruction for supervising learning activities at home. New behaviors are required of teachers to coordinate activities for parents” (Epstein, 1982).

Third, investigating and prioritizing which parent roles are most effective for assisting with student research, and communicating that to parents in order to facilitate parent/ teacher collaboration, is worth further examination and clarification. In this study, the parents’ roles included being tutors, teacher’s monitors, listeners, questioners, task initiators, reactors, and co-learners in the learning activities conducted at home.

Fourth, in order to make this study manageable, the collaboration process partnership was narrowed to just the teacher-librarian and the parents, although there was really a background partnership of three – parent, teacher and student. Epstein’s model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center (Epstein, 1995). As she states:

The inarguable fact is that students are the main actors in their education, development, and success in school. School, family, and community partnerships cannot simply produce successful students. Rather, partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own successes. The

assumption is that, if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of student, they are more likely to do their best to learn to read, write, calculate, and learn other skills and talents and to remain in school. (p. 702)

As students enter adolescence, many parents begin to lose touch with their children's education. Educators need to think how they might connect with families with early adolescents to maximize continued support for student learning and development (Epstein & Connors, 1995, p. 139). A PTL collaboration process will help the teacher-librarian connect more effectively with parents and will make the children very conscious of her interaction with their parents. In turn, parents will reinforce that school is important and students will see that adults in both environments are investing time and resources to work together to help them become successful students and independent, lifelong learners.

Students need to be taught how to take responsibility for their role in the three-way partnership. They were not as clear about their role in this introductory study of collaboration as they needed to be, nor did they receive enough instruction about how to proceed in working with their parents and becoming communications messengers between home and school. More research needs to investigate how education should be organized to enable

students to take appropriate leadership for their learning (Epstein & Sander, 1996, p. 10).

Fifth, further research could be conducted to see if the PTL collaboration process can be adapted for lower income parents, for parents with limited English, and for parents of students in earlier intermediate grades. In the initial questionnaire, one parent commented that the overview would have been better presented in grades four or five when formal lengthy research projects begin, "so parents and students are aware of how much and what kind of assistance should be expected. That way, by grade seven, both parties are comfortable in knowing what is required of them."

Sixth, the guidelines could be expanded into a handbook for teachers and parents in a format similar to Focus on Research created by the Alberta Ministry of Education or Eisenberg and Johnson's Parent Handbook for the Big Six Skills (1996). But first, a parent assistance framework to correspond to information literacy models should be created that meets Canadian and local school program needs. There are differences in philosophies between library media specialists in the United States and teacher-librarians in Canada and it would be worthwhile to create a uniquely Canadian framework for such parent assistance. If the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA) were to propose development of a provincial information literacy model, then a parent involvement component could be a

very valuable addition. It could enhance reflective student learning, as well as provide advocacy for the role of teacher-librarians. In this way, the concerns and possibilities of parent involvement in learning activities at home, which were systematically studied in this thesis, may reach a wider range of teacher-librarians and parents.

A Final Reflection

With an established student research program and a parent/teacher-librarian (PTL) collaboration process in place, grade seven students, their parents and the teacher-librarian were involved in a three-way partnership for the first time at a Lower Mainland elementary school. The parents and the teacher-librarian brought different strengths and perspectives to the common task of helping children learn and all parties benefited from the involvement.

A PTL collaboration process helped parents in the study know how to assist with homework in more productive ways and students responded positively to the assistance that their parents gave them. Interviewed students unanimously agreed that parent involvement increased their learning and achievement. As one student so aptly wrote in her thinking log: "I like doing this project because my mom and I (mostly me) learned a lot." From the comprehensive survey of parent involvement research completed by Anne

Henderson and Nancy Berla (1981, 1987, and 1995) and reported by the National Parent Teacher Association of the United States (1998), the more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.

Through the PTL collaboration process, the teacher-librarian became better informed about families' concerns in working on instructional activities at home and reached a greater level of understanding about student work. Acting on those suggestions has given the teacher-librarian a great feeling of accomplishment and rejuvenation and affirmed her belief that "the improvement of practice is a continuous process of renewal" (Fullan, 1991, p. 90).

In writing this thesis, the teacher-librarian demonstrated to her students and their parents that she is a continuous, lifelong learner. By having students mirror the thesis process in their own research projects, albeit on a small scale, she tried to instill in her students and their parents the importance of metacognition and the research process. She too learned immensely from this trial period of PTL collaboration and is eager to share what she learned with her upcoming 'community of learners'.

A PTL collaboration process could not have evolved without the teacher-librarian's commitment to its success and the support received from teaching colleagues and principal. It was a time-consuming process, but the

rewards and benefits of collaboration were certainly worth the effort. The teacher-librarian addressed most of the parents' and students' concerns with actual or potential solutions ready to be acted upon next year. Most of those concerns would never have surfaced without the two-way communication, trust, and respect built between the parents and the teacher-librarian. Two prominent American researchers in school partnerships (Connors & Epstein, 1995) maintain that researchers and educators must continue to develop the abilities of parents to share responsibility for children's learning with schools. Working towards continuous improvement of the PTL collaboration process, the parents and the teacher-librarian will seek ways to work as a team and creatively combine both professional and parental knowledge bases in order to make home and school complementary learning environments for children. This will send a very important message to the children, that learning is a lifelong and satisfying process.

The teacher-librarian concludes that a PTL collaboration process, as it strengthens a school library research program and benefits the parents, students, and teacher-librarian, merits continuance, but, with the recommended changes made as a result of this study.

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Appendix A:
The Initial Parent Questionnaire
The Final Parent Questionnaire

Initial Grade Seven Parent Questionnaire of October 1998: Upper Lynn's Effective Report Writing Program (ERWP)

1. In which grade did your child enter Upper Lynn? _____
 2. When giving help with your child's research projects in years past, which combination of parent help was most prevalent? Please tick most appropriate blank.
 Neither parent helped _____ Both parents helped equally _____
 Both parents helped but one subordinate to the other _____ One parent helped _____
 Other (specify): _____
-

[Directions: Mark an X inside one box between each pair of words below, so that your opinion is accurately expressed.]

How would you rate the document you received called Overview of the Grade Seven ERWP Program 1998/1999?

	strongly agree	agree	agree	strongly agree	
1. Clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unclear
2. Useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Useful
3. Effective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ineffective
4. Overwhelming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Overwhelming
5. Well-Planned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Well-Planned
6. Frustrating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Frustrating
7. Uninteresting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting
8. Helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Helpful
9. Learned a Little	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learned a Lot
10. Too Detailed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Enough Detail

How difficult do you consider this grade seven ERWP program to be for your child?

11. **Easy** **Difficult**

To what degree do you feel positively about the demands your child's ERWP project places on your own time and resources?

12. **Feel Positively** **Do Not Feel Positively**

How much time do you feel you have to assist your child with the ERWP program?

13. **None** **Ample Time**

How would you rate the amount of assistance you give your child with homework?

14. **None** **Enormous**

How would you rate the amount of assistance you give your child with research projects?

15. **None** **Enormous**

How sure do you feel about the *amount* of assistance you *should* give your child with research projects?

16. **Certain** **Uncertain**

How sure do you feel about the *kind* of assistance you *should* give your child with research projects?

17. **Certain** **Uncertain**

How familiar are you with the research process taught at Upper Lynn?

18. **Familiar** **Unfamiliar**

To what degree might you be interested in learning some strategies for helping your child with the ERWP program?

19. **Interested** **Not Interested**

Additional comments you might have about parent participation and/or the ERWP program:

**The Final Grade Seven Parent Questionnaire of August 1999:
The Parent/Teacher-Librarian Collaboration Process
in the School Library Research Program**

[Directions: Mark an X inside one box between each pair of words below, so that your opinion is accurately expressed.]

1. The rating of the document you received called **Overview of the Grade Seven ERWP Program 1998/1999**

strongly agree agree agree strongly agree

Informative

--	--	--	--

Uninformative

Too Little

--	--	--	--

Too Much

2. The training parents received at the first meeting on critical thinking and research question criteria from Dr. Roy Daniels and the teacher-librarian

Informative

--	--	--	--

Uninformative

Suitable

--	--	--	--

Unsuitable

3. The training parents received at the second meeting on homework advice from Dianne Rice, a Vancouver area counsellor

Informative

--	--	--	--

Uninformative

Suitable

--	--	--	--

Unsuitable

4. The difficulty and scope of the student research project

Manageable

--	--	--	--

Not Manageable

5. Your child's reaction to working with you on question formulation

Cooperative

--	--	--	--

Uncooperative

6. Knowing the right kind of assistance to give your child in research homework

Certain

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Uncertain

7. Your reaction to working with your child on question formulation

Satisfied

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Dissatisfied

Worthwhile

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Not Worthwhile

8. Achieving a good balance between your child's desire for independence and your offer of help with research question formulation

A Dilemma

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Not A Dilemma

9. The collaboration between the parents and the teacher-librarian

Beneficial

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Not Beneficial

Time-Consuming

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Time Manageable

Concerns Aired

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Concerns Ignored

10. The formulation of guidelines for balanced and effective parent assistance

Not Beneficial

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Beneficial

Sufficient

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Insufficient

11. The treatment of parents in the collaboration process by the teacher-librarian

Fair

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Unfair

12. Continuance of the parent collaboration process for next year's grade 7 parents

Profitable

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Not Profitable

13. Now that you have completed the parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process, how do you feel about helping your child in future projects?

14. Two-way communication is very important in the parent/teacher-librarian collaboration process. What suggestions do you have to improve our communication?

15. If you could make any changes to improve the grade seven ERWP program 1999/2000,, what would they be?

16. What did the teacher-librarian do that helped you most in working with your child on research question formulation?

If you have any additional comments, please put them here:
(For example, did you gain enough information and direction in the collaboration process to be able to help your child? Were the handouts from the meetings useful?)

Please feel free to use the other side of this page for comments. Thank you very much for completing the final questionnaire and participating in this study.

Appendix B:
Overview Of The Grade Seven
Effective Report Writing Program

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GRADE SEVEN EFFECTIVE REPORT WRITING PROCESS 1998/1999

Upper Lynn students have been taught a research process from grades one to grade seven. In the primary years, students learned to take facts, to categorize and sequence them as a pre-writing process. In the later primary years, students composed paragraphs from their sequenced facts, edited them and presented a final copy in written form. In the intermediate grades, students created projects where the general topic was chosen by the teacher. The process was strengthened with practice in locating information from a wide variety of sources, gleaning appropriate facts from the information, sorting and categorizing facts, composing and editing a draft composition, and creating a visually appealing final copy. Students had practice in oral presentation as well.

In grade seven, students will have opportunity to practice all the skills mentioned above. One major change will make the research more inquiry-based. Students will explore topics of their own interest and, more narrowly, questions within those topics, that are of personal relevance and meaning for them. Students will be encouraged to develop workable and stimulating research questions that require them to solve problems, make information decisions or arrive at sound conclusions. To locate suitable information, they will go beyond the school library into the community and the World Wide Web. They will be asked to find "human" resources for their projects. Most importantly, they will be asked to spend much more time thinking, reflecting and reading about their research question. The teacher-librarians and the students' classroom teachers will be guiding students from September to March in this process. It is crucial that students find strategies to keep up to date with the **twelve assignments** listed in this document on pages 2-10.

Thinking Logs:

Students will be asked to prepare a *minimum* of **three thinking logs** (one page each). The logs are a way to keep a diary of thoughts and feelings about the way the project is progressing. Professional researchers consider reflection an important part of the research process. Thinking logs provide students with a way of **reflecting** on the process so far and give students an opportunity for venting frustrations, expressing confusion and recording successes in the projects. It also alerts the teacher to any problems that have not been anticipated. Students are to hand in thinking logs as soon as they are written, so any confusion can be cleared up right away and successes applauded.

Note that in **Assignment #11: Research Steps Taken**, students will be asked to list the places in those steps **where** they wrote their three (or more) thinking logs. To keep organized, students should write the corresponding assignment number under the title of each thinking log. For example, Thinking Log #3 (Assignment #7).

Choosing A Partner Mentor

To give students an opportunity to seriously discuss their thoughts and feelings about their projects with their peers, a time will be set up for students to cooperatively discuss and solve problems that are arising in the projects. Each student is asked to record the name of his/her partner-mentor (from his/her classroom) in the blank provided here:

My partner-mentor will be: _____
(to be filled in by November 10, 1998)

Later on, students will be asked to peer edit each other's draft copies in Assignment #9. The partner-mentor would be a suitable choice for peer editor as well, although students are free to choose a different person, if they wish.

SET OF TWELVE ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE GRADE SEVEN PROJECT
--

Assignment #1: EXPLORING TOPICS

Due: Wed., Nov. 18, 1998

[What am I interested in finding out more about?]

There are three parts to this assignment.

1. **WEB #1:** Take an inventory of your interests and experiences by writing them in a list. On a separate piece of paper, make a first web of possible topics you're most interested in. Call the centre of the web, TOPICS.
2. **WEB #2:** On a separate piece of paper, make a second web of the topic in which you are the **most** interested. Call the centre of the web by the name of the topic you have chosen. Add bits of knowledge that you have about this topic around the centre.

(Begin thinking about a question within this topic that you would like to answer. See sample questions on page 3. Later, you will be asked to seek a "human" resource and do an interview in person, over the phone, by email or by fax. Try to choose a topic that will fit this requirement.)

3. **MY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:** On a separate piece of paper, write name, date and title: Prior Knowledge (What I Know). Below the title, number and list every fact you think you know about this topic so far. You can always add facts to this list throughout the project, as they come to mind.

* You may wish to do some reading on or talk to a knowledgeable person about the topic of interest you have chosen. This may give you some ideas for your main question.

A SAMPLE OF HIGHER THINKING QUESTIONS FROM PREVIOUS UPPER LYNN STUDENTS:

After examining criteria and strategies for formulating powerful, workable research questions, students are encouraged to come up with research questions that have deep meaning or relevance for them. Students are encouraged to choose questions that weigh alternatives or compare and contrast two themes or topics. Students are encouraged to choose questions that are long-range, that will have more lasting worth in their lives.

Main Question #1:

What skills do I need to start my own business?

Related Questions:

1. What steps must one take to start a business from scratch?
2. Do I have any of the skills already?

Main Question #2:

Which would be better - glasses, contacts or laser surgery?

Related Questions:

1. How dangerous is laser surgery?
2. What are the advantages of contacts over glasses?

Main Question #3:

How can I help my friend whom I suspect is suffering from anorexia?

Related Questions:

1. What are the symptoms of anorexia?
2. Is there anything you can do to reverse the progress once it's started?

Main Question #4:

Could I find out more about my relatives by investigating their knowledge of family stories?

Related Questions:

1. Which relatives know the most about our family stories?
2. Among the elders, who has wisdom to share?

Main Question #5:

What are the differences between the World Wildlife Fund (a worldwide organization) and Friends of Animals (a local organization here in Vancouver)?

Related Questions:

1. Which organization would I consider joining?
2. Which organization does the most good?

Main Question #6:

What are the main issues concerning the fighting in Ireland?

Related Questions:

1. Why are they fighting?
2. Why can't they come to a peaceful settlement?

Main Question #7:

What would I have to do to achieve a healthy lifestyle?

Related Questions:

1. How is healthy living decided?
2. Do I have what it takes?

Main Question #8:

What are the issues surrounding land mines?

Related Questions:

1. Is there any way I could get involved in helping?
2. What do land mines have to do with me?

.....
Assignment #2: FORMULATING QUESTIONS

Due: Wed., Dec. 2, 1998

[Specifically, what do I want to know?]

On a separate piece of paper, set up page with name, date and title called **Effective Report Writing Process**. Using the following three headings, compose your questions. You may wish to refer to the example on diabetes listed after the three headings:

- A. Main Question
- B. Related Questions
- C. Background Questions

MAIN QUESTION (To include in Introduction to Project):

Example: Since my mom has **diabetes**, what can I do to prevent getting it, too?

RELATED QUESTIONS:

1. Is diabetes hereditary?
2. If it is, how likely am I to get it?

QUESTIONS FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION (could become headings in outline):

1. What is diabetes?
2. Are there different kinds of diabetes?
3. How is diabetes kept under control?
4. Is there a particular age that it happens?
5. What happens if you don't take care of yourself?
6. Can you die from diabetes?
7. Why do people get diabetes? (possibly no answer to this one)
8. Is there a cure?

* A good place to look for possible questions on diabetes is in the print version of the World Book Encyclopedia under "Diabetes". The World Book usually presents the information under subheadings that could be turned into background questions.

Assignment #3: READING/KEYWORDS

Due: Wed., Dec. 9, 1998

[What resources might give me some answers?]

There are two parts to this assignment:

1. **LOCATE RESOURCES:** Try to find all the resources you can, so that you can read information about the questions you have formulated in Assignment #2.
 - Go to the encyclopedias and subject card catalogue first.
 - Make a trip to Lynn Valley library and search on the computer under Subject.
 - Look in the phone book for associations that might have resources and ask them to send the information to you.
 - Read the newspaper for information on your topic.
 - Phone people who may be able to guide you further.

You may discover that your main question is too broad and that a narrower question would be more suitable for this project. You may decide that one of the related questions is a better "main" question. Do not hesitate to narrow your question so that the project is manageable for you. There is always a possibility that you can't find suitable information to answer your questions. You may have to go back and redo Assignment #2 in light of the lack of information. If this is the case, you will be given time to redo Assignment #2 and a new assignment schedule will be prepared for you.

2. **LIST KEYWORDS AND PHRASES:** On a separate piece of paper, make a **list of keywords and/or phrases** as you read about your topic. When or if you use the World Wide Web, you then will have a word "bank" of terms to use for searching. Label this paper with name, date and the title, **List Of Keywords For My Topic**.

Example:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. diabetes | 4. Blood sugar |
| 2. insulin | 5. Insulin shock |
| 3. Type 1 | 6. Diabetes mellitus |

Assignment #4: WEB SEARCH Due: Wed., Dec. 16, 1998

[What keywords will lead me to information on my question?]

This assignment asks you to do a Web Search on the Internet. There will be exceptions made if it is determined that the Internet would likely not contain useful information for your question or you have enough information from other types of resources.

For **each** site that you find, you **must** fill out a Web Evaluation Form (available from the school library) before printing out the material. Be sure that you have listed the URL (address) of the site on the Web Evaluation Guide. The Guide will help you determine if the Web site has reliable and accurate information. Be sure to record any site you decide to use for fact-taking on your Resource List forms under Internet.

To print from the school library computer: Go under File to Save As. When the dialogue box appears, click on the title bar, Netscape, and drag the bar down to Public Share. Save your document in Public Share by clicking on the Save button. When you exit Netscape, go to Public Share and open your document there. Go under File to Print. This printed copy will not contain any graphics and the URL address will not be present. You need your URL address for your Resource List. In a Resource List, you give credit to all the resources you have used for your project.

Assignment #5: INTERVIEW Due: Wed., Jan. 6, 1999

[What knowledgeable person could I contact for information?]

Prepare to do an **interview** by writing down possible interview questions. Title this sheet as Possible Interview Questions. Then reorganize from most important to least important by numbering them. Cross out any that are not powerful questions. On a new sheet of paper, make a good copy called Interview Questions. Record your questions from most important to least important. Keep in mind what you learned earlier this year about the process of creating good interview questions. (Use the sheet called Telephone Etiquette as a guide, if you intend to do a phone interview.)

Remember to write a thank you letter or note to the person you interviewed. Do a draft copy and then a good copy. Please edit your work for spelling, punctuation, capitalization and left-out words. Try to be specific about how this person helped you. This shows that you have put some thought into your thank you.

Assignment #6: RESOURCE LIST Due: Wed., Jan. 13, 1999

[What resources must I credit in my project?]

There are two parts to this assignment:

1. **Preparation Work:** Gather all your resources together and transfer all the pertinent information by filling out the Resource List forms handed out in class.
2. **Final Resource List:** Using these sheets as your guide, make up a final **Resource List** with a proper heading, name and date. Use the sample Resource List on Emily Carr (page 4) as your guide.

*Another good time to write a thinking log.

Assignment #7: FACT-TAKING Due: Wed., Jan. 20, 1999

[How can I select facts from all the information I have?

What information is important?]

Begin fact-taking by writing down facts as briefly as you can. Start with your sheet from Assignment #1 called Prior Knowledge and turn that knowledge into facts first.

Use the sheet handed out in class called Rules for Fact-Taking as your guide. Fact sheets will be supplied to you, if you wish. You want to select facts that will address the questions you have formulated in Assignment #2.

- You might highlight your Internet information or pamphlets or xeroxed materials as a start to fact-taking.
- You might put question marks beside information that you either don't understand or cannot read. Please do not use facts you don't understand! This is counter-productive.
- It is very important to write the facts as precisely and briefly as possible. When you compose your draft, you want to construct your own meaning from these facts, so the writing really reflects on who you are. Otherwise, if you copy too much of the information you have gathered, you are guilty of **plagiarism**. The project is owned by you and is to be in your own words. The facts are free, but not the writing style or someone else's particular sequencing of facts. Make your own meaning from the facts.

.....

Assignment #8: SORTING/CATEGORIZING

[What headings will I choose and how will I sequence my facts?]

Due: Wed., Jan. 27, 1999

Sort your facts into categories with headings of your choosing. Refer to your Background Questions and Main Question as guides. Your headings do not have to be a perfect match to your background questions since you may have decided after all your reading that there are other questions more important to you. It is your right to sort and categorize your information in the way you feel it is best to answer the main question you have chosen.

On a separate piece of paper, write an **outline of your project** as follows:

Start with name, date, and **title of your research topic**.

After that, use capital letters and numbers to list all headings and subheadings:

A. Introduction

1. Main Questions
2. Reason For Choice

B. Background Information

1. Category #1
2. Category #2
3. Category #3, etc.

C. Conclusion

1. Question Answered Or Not Answered
2. Why or Why Not
3. Question(s) For Further Research

*Part B. is the main part of your written project and should be from 3-10 pages. Each subheading in Parts A. and C. are short paragraphs. This is just to guide you and not to limit you.

*You could write a thinking log here as well.

Assignment #9: DRAFT COPY**Due: Wed., Feb. 10, 1999**

[How well can I communicate the meaning I have made from my research?]

There are two parts to this assignment:

A. Use your sequenced and categorized facts to compose paragraphs that will communicate the meaning you have made from all your research. Use your outline to guide you (Assignment #7). Remember, however, that your outline is not written in stone. Therefore, you can make more appropriate changes to your headings and subheadings as you compose your draft copy. Double space your draft and write on only one side of the page. If using computer, please make your spacing 2 lines apart.

B. EDITING:

Self-edit your work and then exchange with a partner and peer edit. **Be sure that your peer editor signs your draft** with name and date at the top of the draft copy.

*You could write a thinking log here as well.

Assignment #10: GOOD COPY**Due: Wed., Feb. 24, 1999**

[How accurate and visually pleasing can my written presentation be?]

Make a good copy of your edited draft. Be sure to give your good copy a title, name and date. Make your headings and subheadings stand out. A title page is optional, but it can add to the visual presentation.

Assignment #11: RESEARCH STEPS**Due: Wed., Mar. 3, 1999**

[What steps did I take to research this project?]

On a separate piece of paper, number and list the steps you took from beginning to end to complete the Effective Report Writing Process. Be sure to set up name, date and the title: The Effective Report Writing Process. For example, it might start this way:

1. Thought up a **main question** with related questions I really wanted answered
2. Listed my **prior knowledge** about the questions
3. Thought up **background questions** to go with my main question
4. Wrote a **thinking log** to reflect on what I had done so far
5. Located some resources and began **reading** about my topic
6. Made a list of **keywords** for a later Web search

Assignment #12: Table of Contents/Overall Organization

[Is my organization clear? Is my project easy to follow?]

Before handing in the entire project so that both the **process** and the **final product** can be assessed, make sure you include a Table of Contents. The title of your research project should be visible immediately under the Table of Contents heading. Do not include your title page (if you have one) as an entry in the Table of Contents. Your binder or duotang cover that will hold your project should be clearly labelled with your name, your grade and your teacher's name.

Remember to allow ample time to assemble your project. Double-check that everything is in order. Read your project through before handing it in.

Order of project is as follows: (Check off as you assemble.)

- ☐ 1. Table of Contents (preceded by a title page, if you wish)
- ☐ 2. Good Copy
- ☐ 3. Thinking Logs (minimum of three)
- ☐ 4. Two Topic Exploration Webs (assignment #1)
- ☐ 5. Prior Knowledge (assignment #1)
- ☐ 6. Created Questions (assignment #2)
- ☐ 7. List of Keywords For My Topic (assignment #3)
- ☐ 8. Completed Web Evaluation Guides (if Internet Search undertaken)
- ☐ 9. Interview Questions (draft and good copy from assignment #5)
- ☐ 10. Resource List (assignment #6)
- ☐ 11. Project Outline (assignment #7)
- ☐ 12. All Notes and Fact-Taking (highlighted information also)
- ☐ 13. Draft Copy (check that peer editor has signed name at top)
- ☐ 14. Any rough notes from any of the 12 assignments
- ☐ 15. All Other Sheets Handed Out In Class:
 resource list sheets, fact-taking guide sheet, strategies for sharing sheet, list of the 12
 assignments sheets, telephone interview etiquette sheet
- ☐ 16. Any other materials you wish to include

Optional Assignment for Bonus Marks:

You may turn information from your good copy into a brochure, a chart, a video speech, an oral presentation, etc. Refer to the sheet handed out in class for further ideas on ways of presenting.

As a way to keep the memory of all the work you have done, perhaps someone in your family could make a video recording of you presenting and talking about your project.

ENTIRE PROJECT DUE: Wed., March 10, 1999

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____

I have read this document and noted the tentative due dates for the 12 assignments.

Please note: We realize that these assignments are academically challenging and require critical thinking skills from your children. This research program is collaboratively planned and taught by both the classroom teachers and the teacher-librarians. We intend to be very supportive of

your childrens' efforts and to give as much individual instruction as is possible. In the end we hope that we instill skills and procedures that will help them throughout life. Do not hesitate to call with concerns about your child's progress through this process.

At this time, most due dates are tentative. We will send home a one-page sheet of assignments with firm dates after discussion with students.

GRADE SEVEN ERWP PROCESS MARKING SHEET

STUDENT NAME: _____

PROJECT NAME: _____

[CRITERIA]	[STANDARDS]
Thinking Logs (minimum 3)	/15
Formulation of Questions [Assignments #1 and 2]	/20
Completion of Keyword List and/or Web Evaluation Guide Sheets [Assignments #3 and #4]	/10
Interview Techniques [Assignment #5]	/15
Correct Formatting of Resource List [Assignment #6]	/10
Fact-Taking [Assignment #7]	/20
Outline of Project [Assignment #8]	/5
Draft [Assignment #9]	/25
Good Copy [Assignment #10]	/10
Research Steps Model [Assignment #11]	/10
Overall Organization [Assignment #12]	/10
TOTAL:	/150
Bonus Marks:	[Percent: %]

**Appendix C:
Interview Questions
For Parents and Students**

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Parameters of the interview will be established for the interviewee by giving an overview of the questions to be asked. Along with finding out how our collaboration has been going, the interviewer is most interested in ascertaining how parents worked with their children at home on research question formulation. In interviewing the parent/child pairs, the interviewer will standardize the questions for each pair as much as possible.

Concerns, Benefits and Disadvantages of the Collaboration Process

1. What did you like about us working together to help your child?
What did you not like?
2. How would you compare the assistance you gave your child in research homework this time and the assistance you have given in the past?
3. If your partnership with your child was successful, why was that so? What was most successful?
4. In what way did our collaboration process contribute to the success?
5. How do you now feel about the kind and amount of assistance you give your child with research homework?

Techniques That Worked For Parents

6. How have you managed the time demands of collaboration?
7. What advantages, if any, did our collaboration have for your child? Was it worth the commitment of your time?
8. How did the overview and description of the 12 assignments for ERWP help or hinder?
(Show the overview.)
9. What information was most useful from topic exploration and question formulation? What would you add or eliminate?
10. What understandings about assisting your child did you get from our meetings?
What parts of the meetings would you have eliminated?
11. Which research question criteria were most useful when you worked with your child? (Show criteria).
12. In what areas would you like to have had more instruction?

Potential Improvements To The Collaboration Process

13. Is there anything else I haven't mentioned that you would like to see changed or improved?
14. Were there concerns not addressed in our meetings that you would like to talk about now?
15. Were there any concerns that were too sensitive to raise publicly? If so, are there other ways that those concerns could have been discussed without discomfort?
16. Do you feel you were treated fairly throughout the collaboration?

Child's Reaction to the Parent Assistance

17. How would you describe your child's reaction to the increased collaborative process?

Power Structure in Parent/Child Partnership

18. Were you able to establish a comfortable working relationship with your child?
19. Now that you have assisted with question formulation, how do you view the parent's role in the accomplishment of the child's work?
20. Did our collaboration have any influence on your view of parent assistance? If so, what?
21. Is there anything else on which you would like to comment?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

As an introduction, the teacher-librarian will say to the student:

"An interview is a way for me to find out answers to questions about student research that have been puzzling me, especially the area of parents working with you at home. I want to assist in making parent help better for everybody concerned, including you. I need to find out how it went as you worked with your parent(s)."

Dynamics of the Parent/Student Partnership During Question Formulation

1. Did you work with both parents or one parent this time?
2. Do you think receiving help at home made any difference to the quality of your project? (Without the help from your parent(s), would your project have been just as good?)
3. Did you notice that your parents worked in a new way with you this time?

4. Could you rate the degree of difficulty for working on question formulation with your parent(s) out of 10? (10 being extremely difficult, 1 being extremely easy)
5. How long did it take you to formulate a research question with your parent(s)?
6. Without your parent(s), would it have taken as long?
7. By working with you to develop your research questions, did your parent(s) make the project easier to do?
8. What were the most difficult aspects or parts of working together?

The Task of Question Formulation/Techniques That Worked

9. If the task of question formulation itself was difficult, could you explain why you think it was so difficult?
10. Did the teacher's instructions about question formulation help you work on this task?
11. I would like to ask you some questions about the overview of the ERWP program and the set of assignments, especially assignments 1 and 2. (Show student the overview document.) Was there anything about the description of the two assignments – topic exploration and question formulation that was confusing?

Power Relationship Between Parent/Child

12. When you worked with your parent(s), who did most of the work – you or your parent(s)?
13. Who made most of the decisions when you worked together?
14. How did you feel about that arrangement?

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Parent/Student Partnership

15. What was the best part of this experience of working with your parent(s)?
16. What was the worst part of this experience?
17. Were there more pluses or minuses in working with your parent(s)?
18. If you were to repeat this task with your parent(s) again, would you change anything?
19. Is there anything else on which you would like to comment?

Appendix D:
Guidelines for Parent Assistance

Guidelines for Parent Involvement 1999/2000

A. Guidelines for Parents (ideas suggested by the parents and teacher- librarian)

Organization:

- Check regularly that all handouts and assignments are in one spot in the student's binder (easily mislaid over six months).
- Read through the overview for the ERWP project at the beginning of the year.
- Then read directions **together** for each assignment as it is worked on, so both parent and student know what is expected and how much time an assignment might take to complete.
- Make a cleanup of collected information that is not relevant.

Research Question Formulation:

- Emphasize the first two criteria for a good research question (is researchable/ is of genuine interest and relevance to the student). This is a long-term project and if interest wanes and resources are scarce, the project gets harder to complete.

Parent Assistance:

- For the student, being independent doesn't mean doing the project alone. It means taking charge of the project, but seeking input and assistance when needed.
- Be a facilitator for your child and create an environment that makes the project move along.
- Talk over the project, but let your child make the decisions and take ownership of the project.
- Go to the library with your child. Read some of the resources with him/her and discuss.
- Provoke them to think, be a listener, and help them decipher the information.
- After reading, have them reword to make meaning. This procedure is one of the habits of mind for critical thinking.

Importance of Dialogue:

- Do not write the project for your child, but do talk over the project and make dialogue an important part of the research process.
- When your child does write his/her report, play the role of questioner. For example, tell your child when a sentence or a word does not make sense or is not clear. It is your child's responsibility and right to fix it, if he/she deems it important.
- When in dialogue with your child, do contribute your ideas, but be sure to give your child 'thinking space' so that your ideas can be absorbed and reflected upon. Sometimes the parent ideas are so many and so varied that they overwhelm students.

Appendix E:
Overview of the Research Process 1999/2000
Assignment One: Topic Exploration
Assignment Two: Question Formulation

<p style="text-align: center;">AN OVERVIEW OF THE GRADE SEVEN EFFECTIVE REPORT WRITING PROCESS 1999/2000</p>

In 1988 the staff at Upper Lynn implemented a research program in the school library that continues today. Our students start to learn the research process in grade one and then continue through each successive grade. In the primary years, students learn to take facts, to categorize and sequence them as a pre-writing process. In the later primary years, students compose paragraphs from their sequenced facts, edit them and present a final copy in written form. In the intermediate grades, students create projects where the teacher chooses the general topic. The process is strengthened with practice in locating information from a wide variety of sources, gleaned appropriate facts from the information, sorting and categorizing facts, composing and editing a draft composition, and creating a visually appealing final copy. Students have practice in oral presentation as well.

In grade seven, students will have opportunity to practice all the skills mentioned above. One major change will make the research process more inquiry-based. Students will explore topics of *their own interest* and, more narrowly, questions within those topics that are of personal relevance and meaning to them. Students will be encouraged to develop workable and stimulating research questions that require them to solve problems, make decisions and/or arrive at sound conclusions. To locate suitable information, they will go beyond the school library into the community and the World Wide Web. They will be asked to find "human" resources for their projects. Most importantly, they will be asked to spend much more time thinking, reflecting and reading about the research questions they have formulated. The teacher-librarian and the students' classroom teachers will be guiding students from October to March in this process. Parent involvement in helping students at home is encouraged and evening meetings will be held in late October for parents who would like to know more about how to assist their children with research homework.

Thinking Logs:

Students will be asked to prepare a *minimum* of **three thinking logs** (one page each). The logs are a way to keep a diary of thoughts and feelings about the way the project is progressing. Professional researchers consider reflection an important part of the research process. Thinking logs provide students with a way of **reflecting** on the process so far and give students an opportunity for venting frustrations, expressing confusion and recording successes in the projects. It also alerts the teacher to any problems that have not been anticipated. Students are to hand in thinking logs as soon as they are written, so any confusion can be cleared up right away and successes applauded.

Choosing A Partner Mentor

To give students an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their projects seriously with their peers, a time will be set up for students to cooperatively discuss and solve problems that are arising in the projects.

Later, students will be asked to peer edit each other's draft copies of the research work in Assignment #9. The partner-mentor would be a suitable choice for peer editor as well, although students are free to choose a different person, if they wish.

Teacher-Librarian's 'Office Hours'

From October to December, Mrs. Perry will be in the library Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 to 4:15 to help grade seven students with any problems that arise in the research work. From January to March, the office hours will be Mondays and Thursdays. If difficulties arise at home when working on research projects, students know they can come into the library on Mondays and help will be available to them.

Please note: Due dates are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.

A revised schedule will be given out if due dates are changed. Some assignments can be easily completed in a day or two (#8-Outline, #11-Research Steps) while others are the culmination of weeks of work (#7-Fact-taking, #9-Draft Copy). Some spaces in the assignment schedule allow students to catch up who have fallen behind and need increased teacher supervision. That catch-up process happens after the due dates and is time-consuming for the teachers. Students may hand in work earlier than the due dates, if they wish to work ahead with directions from the teacher-prepared assignment sheets.

Students are encouraged to select a topic of interest in October and then do a great deal of reading from a wide variety of resources, before formulating their research questions. Parents can read along with the students and become co-learners. This can be a great time for discussion and reflection. If students have read a great deal and have some background knowledge, they will find it much easier to formulate strong research questions. During this period, some students have to choose another topic that is more researchable.

The thinking logs (procedure for reflection) are not part of the 12 listed assignments on the sheet that follows. The three thinking logs are due: 1) Wed., Nov. 10th, 2) Nov. 24th, and 3) Jan. 26th

Entire Project Due: Wed., March 8, 2000 (Some students may want to hand in earlier.)

**GRADE SEVEN ERWP
ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:
PLEASE POST FOR HANDY REFERENCE**

- Assignment #1: EXPLORING TOPICS Due: Wed., Oct. 27, 1999
[What am I interested in finding out more about?]
- Assignment #2: FORMULATING QUESTIONS Due: Wed., Nov. 17, 1999
[Specifically, what do I want to know?]
- Assignment #3: READING/LISTING KEYWORDS Due: Wed., Dec. 1, 1999
[What resources might give me some answers? What keywords will lead me to information on my question?]
- Assignment #4: WEB SEARCH Due: Wed., Dec. 8, 1999
[How will I evaluate the information I find on the Internet?]
- Assignment #5: INTERVIEW Due: Wed., Jan. 12, 2000
[What knowledgeable person could I contact for information? How will I record it?]
- Assignment #6: REFERENCE LIST (Bibliography) Due: Wed., Jan. 19, 2000
[What resources must I credit in my project?]
- Assignment #7: FACT-TAKING/SEQUENCING Due: Wed., Feb. 2, 2000
[How can I select facts from all the information I have? What information is important? What headings will I choose and how will I sequence my facts?]
- Assignment #8: OUTLINE OF REPORT Due: Wed., Feb. 9, 2000
[What order of headings and subheadings will I choose and how will I introduce and conclude my report?]
- Assignment #9: DRAFT COPY Due: Wed., Feb. 23, 2000
[How well can I communicate the meaning I have made from my research?]
- Assignment #10: GOOD COPY Due: Wed., Mar. 1, 2000
[How accurate and visually pleasing can my written presentation be?]
- Assignment #11: RESEARCH STEPS Due: Fri., March 3, 2000
[What steps did I take to research this project?]
- Assignment #12: TABLE OF CONTENTS/ OVERALL ORGANIZATION
[Is my organization clear? Is my project easy to follow?]

**Three Thinking Logs Due: Wed., Nov. 10th, Nov. 24th and Jan. 26th
Entire Project Due: Wed., March 8, 2000**

GRADE SEVEN ERWP PROCESS MARKING SHEET**STUDENT NAME:** _____**PROJECT NAME:** _____**[CRITERIA]****[STANDARDS]**Thinking Logs (minimum 3) **Due Nov. 10th, Nov. 24th and Jan. 26th** /15Formulation of Questions from Student-Selected Topic
[Assignments #1 and 2] **Due Oct. 27th and Nov. 17th, respectively** /20Completion of Keyword List and Web Evaluation Guide Sheets
[Assignments #3 and #4] **Due Dec. 1st and Dec. 8th, respectively** /10Interview Techniques – Final Copy of Questions and Answers
[Assignment #5] **Due Jan. 12th** /15Correct Formatting of Reference List
[Assignment #6] **Due Jan. 19th** /10Fact-Taking
[Assignment #7] **Due Feb. 2nd** /25Outline of Project
[Assignment #8] **Due Feb. 9th** /5Draft
[Assignment #9] **Due Feb. 23rd** /25Good Copy
[Assignment #10] **Due March 1st** /10Research Steps Model
[Assignment #11] **Due March 3rd** /5Overall Organization
[Assignment #12] **Due March 8th** /10
Entire Project Due Friday, March 8th

Sub-total:

Marks deducted for late assignments:

TOTAL: /150

[Percent: %]

Number of assignments in on time: Number of assignments handed in late:

Bonus Marks (recorded separately from the 150 marks for the required project assignments):

GRADE SEVEN ERWP ASSIGNMENT ONE
--

STUDENT'S NAME AND NUMBER:

Assignment #1: EXPLORING TOPICS Due: Wed., Oct. 27, 1999

[What am I interested in finding out more about?]

There are two parts to this assignment and both parts must be handed in together on or before October 27th. Please attach this assignment instruction sheet to the front of your work before handing it in and ask your parents to sign the home-to-school communications section.

1. SKETCHING A WEB OF TOPICS

First: Before drawing your web, take some time to just think about your interests and anything you are really curious to learn more about. You may want to make a list of general topics in which you have an interest. Sometimes it helps to talk over your thoughts and ideas with other people (like your parents). Before you start webbing your topics of interest, you might want to browse in a library and look at resources available on topics that might interest you. This might lead you to another topic of interest or a narrower topic that might be more manageable to research.

Second: On a piece of paper, make a web of possible topics you are most seriously interested in researching. Label the centre of the web, TOPICS. Include at least five topics of real interest to you. Do not go beyond 12 topics. Avoid being too general in your choice of topics. For example, computers (too general), comparison of computers for family purchase (more specific); bears (too general), eating habits of black bears (specific); Medieval times (too general), lives of peasant girls and noble girls (specific); art (too general), painting with watercolours (specific). You have now completed the first part of the assignment that is to be handed in by October 27th to Mrs. Perry or your classroom teacher. You may hand in any assignment early, if you wish.

2. PRIOR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MY SELECTED TOPIC FOR RESEARCH

First: Begin **thinking** about your one topic (a) you would **most** like to know more about, and (b) you think you could find enough information about (through books, interviews, Internet, associations, etc.). Later, you will be asked to seek a "human" resource and do an interview with an expert on your topic, in person, over the phone, by email or by fax. Choose a topic that will fit this requirement and begin thinking about who might be a likely interviewee. Mrs. Perry and the staff have some contacts that might be helpful to you. With this in mind, you may have to think about choosing your 2nd or 3rd most interesting topic for this year's research project.

Second: On a piece of paper separate from your web of 5-12 topics, write name, date and the title: **Prior Knowledge (What I Already Know)**. Below this page setup (name, date, title), number and list every fact you think you know about this topic so far (minimum of 10 required). If you cannot think of 10 facts, do some preliminary reading before doing this part of the assignment. Students often know more about the topic than they put down on paper. Give yourself time to think. This list will also become part of your fact-taking assignment in December and January. Always take time to proofread your work before handing it in.

BRAVO! You have now completed both parts of Assignment One and you should be ready to hand in 2 pages: (1) the web, and (2) the list of prior knowledge, to Mrs. Perry or your classroom teacher before or on October 27th. Remember to attach the assignment instruction sheet to your work before handing it in for marking. When the assignment has been marked and is given back to you, be sure to put the assignment in a safe and sensible place, so you can include it in the final project due on March 8th. It will go in the back of your project under Preparatory Work. Being organized, efficient and thoughtful is vital to doing good research.

HOW TO GET READY FOR THE NEXT ASSIGNMENT

(Assignment Two - Research Question Formulation):

First: You may wish to do some further reading on or talk to a knowledgeable person about the topic of interest you have chosen. This may give you some ideas of what you are most interested in within that topic. It is possible that you have chosen too large a topic (such as Diabetes, a topic that could fill many volumes) and you may need to narrow it down even further (such as My Mother's Diabetic Condition) when you go on to the second assignment, so your project is manageable. Keep in mind that the process of learning how to think and do research is more important than the *quantity* of facts you are going to select. The *quality* of your facts are very important. You will be required to find a **minimum of 50 pertinent facts** on your topic. Most students' good copies of their projects are from 5 to 10 pages typed (double-spaced on one side).

Second: Go to the library and start locating resources on your topic. Encyclopedias can be very useful at this point. If resources in the library do not help you, get out the phone book and see if there are associations that might have materials (such as The Canadian Diabetic Association) or search the World Wide Web. The most important activity is reading about your topic to gather background information (the 5 W's – what, who, when, where, why). It is hard to think critically about a topic if you have no background information. The more reading you do now, the better your project will turn out.

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION:

Dear Parent,

Please give me your reactions to your child's work on this assignment.

Write YES or NO for each statement.

- _____ 1. My child understood the assignment and was able to discuss it.
- _____ 2. My child and I enjoyed this activity.
- _____ 3. This assignment helped me know what my child is learning in ERWP.

Any other comments: _____

Parent Signature: _____

GRADE SEVEN ERWP ASSIGNMENT TWO
--

STUDENT'S NAME AND NUMBER:

Assignment #2: FORMULATING QUESTIONS**Due: Wed., Nov. 17, 1999***[Specifically, what do I want to know?]*

In order to formulate good research questions from the topic you have chosen in Assignment #1, you need to consider the criteria for a good main research question.

The main question should:

- ☐ Be researchable (likely to find suitable and sufficient information, especially from an interviewee)
- ☐ Be of genuinely deep interest and connection to the researcher
- ☐ Be narrow enough in scope to be manageable over a 5-month period
- ☐ Be carefully worded so the meaning is clear and concise
- ☐ Allows the researcher to draw conclusions or make judgments that can be supported by the researched information

A SAMPLE OF HIGHER THINKING QUESTIONS FROM PREVIOUS UPPER LYNN STUDENTS:

After examining criteria and strategies for formulating powerful, workable research questions, students are encouraged to come up with research questions that have deep meaning or relevance for them. Students are urged to choose questions that weigh alternatives or compare/contrast two themes or topics, although this is not absolutely necessary. Students are encouraged to choose questions that are long-range, that will have more lasting worth in their lives.

Main Question #1:

As a teenager, what skills do I need to start my own business?

Related Questions:

1. What steps must a person take to start a business from scratch?
2. Do I have any of the skills already?

Main Question #2:

Which would be better for me - contacts or laser surgery?

Related Questions:

1. How dangerous is laser surgery?
2. What are the advantages of contacts over laser surgery?

Main Question #3:

How can I help my friend whom I suspect is suffering from anorexia?

Related Questions:

1. What are the symptoms of teenage anorexia?
2. Is there anything a person can do to reverse the progress once it is started?

Main Question #4:

Could I find out more about my relatives by investigating their knowledge of family stories?

Related Questions:

1. Which relatives know the most about our family stories?
2. Among the elders, who has wisdom to share?

Main Question #5:

What are the differences between the World Wildlife Fund (a worldwide organization) and Friends of Animals (a local organization here in Vancouver)?

Related Questions:

1. Which organization would I consider joining?
2. Which organization does the most good?

Main Question #6:

What does it take to be an attorney and does it suit me?

Related Questions:

1. What type of person makes a good attorney?
2. What courses should I take in high school as preparation?

Main Question #7:

What would I have to do to achieve a healthy lifestyle?

Related Questions:

1. How is healthy living decided?
2. Do I have what it takes?

Main Question #8:

By reading the information I have gathered, what is my opinion on animal experimentation in medical research?

Related Questions:

1. What are some alternatives we can use instead of testing products on animals?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of testing products on animals?

Main Question #9:

What are food additives doing to our health?

Related Questions:

1. Why do we put additives that are bad for us in our food?
2. What are the companies trying to hide?

Main Question #10:

What is the perfect computer for my family's needs, wants and expectations?

Related Questions;

1. Should we buy a used or new computer?
2. What attributes and accessories should we include in the purchase of our computer?
3. What brand should we buy?

.....

First: On a separate piece of paper, set up page with name, date and a title called **Assignment Two: My Research Questions**. Use the following three headings to compose your questions:

- A. Main Question (one question)
- B. Related Questions (two or three questions)
- C. Background Questions (five to ten questions – what, who, when, where, why, how)

You may wish to refer to the example on diabetes listed below to give you some ideas of how to proceed. The related questions usually are alternative questions that you might have made into your main question when you were reflecting on what to make your main question.

Keep in mind that you must choose a main question that narrows your topic to a question that can be answered from selecting 50-80 pertinent facts from your gathered information.

EXAMPLE OF A MAIN QUESTION:

Since my mom has **diabetes**, what can I do to prevent getting it, too?

Appendix F:
Profiles of the Primary Subjects in the Study
School Profile

Profiles of the Primary Subjects in the Study

Eight parents and eight students were the primary subjects in the study. Representing eight of the possible population of 72, they volunteered to be in the study, and, thus, formed a convenience sample. The profiles revealed considerable range within each group of eight parents and eight students.

The Eight Parents

P1/M

- ☐ Occupation: engineer
- ☐ Age: 42
- ☐ First language: Spanish
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: elder
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: moderate:
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: one parent only (mother)
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: both parents, but one subordinate

P2/M

- ☐ Occupation: oil company manager
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: younger
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: moderate
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: one parent only (mother)
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: both parents, but one subordinate

P3/F

- ☐ Occupation: film liaison person
- ☐ Age: 39
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: elder
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: lots
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: one parent only (mother)
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: both parents equally

P4/F

- ☐ Occupation: homemaker
- ☐ Age: 47
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: elder
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: moderate
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: varied
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: one parent only (mother)

P5/F

- ☐ Occupation: optician
- ☐ Age: 44
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: elder
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: lots
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: both parents, but one subordinate
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: one parent only (mother)

P6/F

- ☐ Occupation: homemaker (former teacher)
- ☐ Age: 54
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: two
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: younger
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: lots
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: one parent only (mother)
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: both parents, but one subordinate

P7/F

- ☐ Occupation: health information manager
- ☐ Age: 43
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: one
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: only
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: little
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: one parent only (mother)
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: one parent only (mother)

P8/F

- ☐ Occupation: secretary
- ☐ Age: 39
- ☐ First language: English
- ☐ Number of children: four
- ☐ Order of grade seven child: oldest
- ☐ Amount of help with research given in past: moderate
- ☐ Who helped with research in the past: both parents equally
- ☐ Who helped with research this year: both parents, but one subordinate

The Eight Students

S1/M

- ☐ Birthdate: May 12, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: grade five
- ☐ Academic grade average: B
- ☐ Work habits: good but inconsistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: moderate

S2/M

- ☐ Birthdate: May 9, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: B
- ☐ Work habits: good and consistent
- ☐ Amount of parent research help in the past: moderate

S3/M

- ☐ Birthdate: December 11, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: C+
- ☐ Work habits: poor and inconsistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: lots

S4/M

- ☐ Birthdate: February 5, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: B
- ☐ Work habits: fair and inconsistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: moderate

S5/M

- ☐ Birthdate: September 10, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: B
- ☐ Work habits: excellent and consistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: moderate

S6/M

- ☐ Birthdate: February 6, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: C+
- ☐ Work habits: good but inconsistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: moderate

S7/F

- ☐ Birthdate: July 24, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: grade one
- ☐ Academic grade average: A
- ☐ Work habits: excellent and consistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: little

S8/F

- ☐ Birthdate: June 12, 1986
- ☐ Grade enrolled in present school: kindergarten
- ☐ Academic grade average: C+
- ☐ Work habits: fair and inconsistent
- ☐ Amount of parent help with research in the past: lots

School Profile

Setting:

- ☐ Upper middle class suburb of large city
- ☐ Traditional two-storey building more than 30 years old with four permanent portables
- ☐ Largest elementary school library in the district – more than 10, 000 resources

Policies:

- ☐ Since 1988, all classes (except kindergarten) completed one yearly research study cooperatively planned and taught by the classroom teacher and teacher-librarian.

Students:

- ☐ 489 students in 19 divisions, K-7
- ☐ 4% ESL students and 10% are Asian students
- ☐ Participate in a busy set of extra-curricular activities in the intermediate grades: choir, band, musicals, read-aloud club, volleyball, basketball, track and field

Parents:

- ☐ Well-established, supportive parents who are ambitious for their children
- ☐ High socio-economic level
- ☐ Usually both mother and father work outside the home
- ☐ Very active Parents Advisory Group

Staff:

- ☐ Four male, 21 female teachers
- ☐ 80% have more than 15 years teaching experience
- ☐ Very compatible, caring, conservative group
- ☐ Variety of teaching styles
- ☐ Strengths in music, art, literature, science, physical education
- ☐ High interest in professional development