Prior to the enactment of Public Law 94–142 (later the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA), schools frequently did not encourage parents of children with special needs to actively participate in the education of their children. However, given the numerous concerns that parents may have (such as those mentioned in the chapter-opening vignette) and given the value of family input into educational programs, increasing parental involvement is a welcome trend. This chapter highlights the challenges facing parents, examples of perspectives provided by parents, and strategies for collaboration between educators and parents. The chapter also discusses the potential influences on marriage and siblings of raising a child with disabilities.

Federal law formally established the role of parents relative to students with special needs through IDEA, which requires schools to

▶ involve parents in decision-making activities regarding the education of their child.
▶ inform parents of impending actions regarding their child.
▶ provide information to parents in a form that can be easily understood.
▶ make available due-process rights for parents and their child.
▶ enable parents to request a due-process hearing if the disagreement with school personnel cannot be resolved.

Legislation and parental advocacy have established an increasingly higher degree of family involvement in the education of students with disabilities. School personnel acknowledge the merit of having parents actively participate in the educational process, including identification, referral, assessment, program planning, and implementation. Comprehensive programs of family involvement begin when children with disabilities are young and continue through the transition process out of school and into adulthood.

The challenge for educators is to consider effective ways to involve families in the education of children with disabilities. Table 3.1 describes six categories of **family support** principles.

Family participation can and should occur in many areas. These include involvement with the student's assessment and development of the individualized education program (IEP), involvement with parent groups (e.g., for education and support), observation of the student in the school setting, and communication with educators. Participation in developing the IEP process typically occurs the most frequently. Some families are very involved in their child's special education program, while others have limited involvement. Professionals can satisfy the law by simply inviting parental participation; however, school personnel should develop strategies to facilitate parental involvement or, more appropriately, family involvement. Although some parents create challenges for the school because of their intense level of involvement, for the most part educational programs are greatly strengthened by parental support.

The Family

The viewpoint of what constitutes a family has changed dramatically in recent decades. Traditionally, a *family* was thought of as a group of individuals who live together that includes a mother, a father, and one or more children. However, this stereotypical picture has been challenged by the reality that many, perhaps most, families do not resemble this model. "The idealized *nuclear family* of yesteryear with the stay-at-home, take-care-of-the-children mother and the outside-the-home breadwinner father no longer represents the typical American family" (Allen, 1992, p. 319). Thus, the "Leave It to Beaver" or "Ozzie and Harriet" family of the 1950s has given way to the diversity of the twenty-first-century family (Hanson & Carta, 1996), which can more simply be defined as a group of individuals who live together and care for each others' needs.

TABLE 3.1   **Major Categories and Examples of Family Support Principles**

Category/Characteristic	Examples of Principles
1. **Enhancing a Sense of Community** Promoting the coming together of people around shared values and common needs in ways that create mutually beneficial interdependencies	▶ Interventions should focus on the building of interdependencies between members of the community and the family unit. ▶ Interventions should emphasize the common needs and supports of all people and base intervention actions on those commonalities.
2. **Mobilizing Resources and Supports** Building support systems that enhance the flow of resources in ways that assist families with parenting responsibilities	▶ Interventions should focus on building and strengthening informal support networks for families rather than depending solely on professionals' support systems. ▶ Resources and supports should be made available to families in ways that are flexible, individualized, and responsive to the needs of the entire family unit.
3. **Shared Responsibility and Collaboration** Sharing of ideas and skills by parents and professionals in ways that build and strengthen collaborative arrangements	▶ Interventions should employ partnerships between parents and professionals as a primary mechanism for supporting and strengthening family functioning. ▶ Resources and support mobilization interactions between families and service providers should be based on mutual respect and sharing of unbiased information.
4. **Protecting Family Integrity** Respecting the family's beliefs and values and protecting the family from intrusion upon its beliefs by outsiders	▶ Resources and supports should be provided to families in ways that encourage, develop, and maintain healthy, stable relationships among all family members. ▶ Interventions should be conducted in ways that accept, value, and protect a family's personal and cultural values and beliefs.
5. **Strengthening Family Functioning** Promoting the capabilities and competencies of families necessary to mobilize resources and perform parenting responsibilities in ways that have empowering consequences	▶ Interventions should build on family strengths rather than correct weaknesses or deficits as a primary way of supporting and strengthening family functioning. ▶ Resources and supports should be made available to families in ways that maximize the family's control over and decision-making power regarding services they receive.
6. **Proactive Human Service Practices** Adoption of consumer-driven human service delivery models and practices that support and strengthen family functioning	▶ Service-delivery programs should employ promotion rather than treatment approaches as the framework for strengthening family functioning. ▶ Resource and support mobilization should be consumer-driven rather than service provider–driven or professionally prescribed.

From "Family-Oriented Early Intervention Policies and Practices: Family-Centered or Not?" by C. J. Dunst, C. Johanson, C. M. Trivette, and D. Hamby, 1991, *Exceptional Children, 58*, p. 117. Copyright 1991 by the Council for Exceptional Children. Used by permission.

Numerous family arrangements exist. For example, many families are single-parent families, most frequently with the father absent. A growing number of families are now headed by grandparents, with the children's parents unable or unwilling to accept parental responsibility. And, although not as common as they once were, some families constitute extended family units, with grandparents living with parents and children. Some children also live in foster homes, wherein foster parents fill all legal parental roles Finally, school personnel must also be able to interact with families headed by parents living in gay or lesbian relationships.

An additional twenty-first-century challenge to the family is the increase in both younger and older parents, the increase in the number of families living below the poverty line, the realities of substance abuse, the permeation of violence throughout society, and the move away from state residential care for children with serious support needs (see Agosta & Melda, 1996; Hanson & Carta, 1996; Lesar, Gerber, & Semmel, 1996; Simpson,

1996). There may never have been a time when family changes and challenges have more clearly called for understanding and support.

Cultural Considerations

The success of parent-professional partnerships often hinges on the ability of professionals to develop a level of cultural competence. Wehmeyer, Morningstar, and Husted (1999) summarized thirteen key steps for educators in this process:

1. Ask, rather than assume, what language is spoken at home and by which members.
2. Set goals that take into account the cultural and family norms for personal and social development; this is particularly important with regard to employment and independent living goals.
3. Develop a clear understanding of the cultural interpretations of the disability. Many cultures differ in this aspect, and these views may affect how the family copes.
4. Respect the child-rearing practices of the culture and do not place blame on the family for ways in which those practices differ from those in the mainstream.
5. Ensure that parents have access to all sources of information, including advocacy groups, and ensure that materials explaining rights and responsibilities are available in the native language or through personalized explanations by speakers of the family's language.
6. Enhance self-awareness by understanding who you are from a variety of perspectives, including your family origins and your beliefs, biases, and behaviors. Be aware that your beliefs and values may be different from those of the families you work with.
7. Enhance culture-specific awareness by learning about different cultural groups in terms of child-rearing practices and family patterns. Be careful not to stereotype, but become familiar with the general traditions, customs, and values of the families in your community.
8. Enhance culture-generic awareness by identifying values and practices found in all cultures. This is a way to develop common ground when working with families from different cultures.
9. Enhance cultural issues related to the disability by understanding how cultural views influence the definition and meaning of the disability and therefore the family-professional roles, communication patterns, and expectations and anticipated outcomes.
10. Establish alliances with culturally diverse families by taking a personalized approach to working with the family.
11. Develop outcomes and strategies for facilitating transition to adulthood that promote self-esteem, community interdependence, and inclusion.
12. Improve the multicultural competence of [educational staff]:
    - Provide opportunities to learn how the world views and values of other cultures might differ from their own.
    - Provide opportunities to learn about intercultural communication, including nonverbal communication.
    - Subscribe to resources that focus on multicultural issues, including journals and Internet discussion groups . . .
13. Expose culturally diverse students and families to a variety of role models and resources:
    - Subscribe to magazines that highlight culturally diverse role models and use these in various content areas.
    - Develop mentor programs with role models of color in the community. (pp. 17–18)

Despite undergoing major changes in its structure, the family remains the basic unit of American society. It is a dynamic, evolving social force that remains the key ingredient in a child's life. Teachers must be sensitive to the background of the family to ensure that cultural differences do not interfere with school-family relationships. In addition, school personnel must remember that students' parents or guardians should be involved in educational programs regardless of the specific composition of the family. School per-

Diversity Forum

Working Toward Cultural Reciprocity

Brianna is a kindergartner with ADHD. During story time she regularly interrupts her teacher, Ms. Alvarez, with numerous questions and comments about the story. Ms. Alvarez has tried to modify this disruptive behavior, but with little success. When she calls Brianna's parents to discuss this problem, they reply, "Oh yes, that's the Hawai'ian way. It's part of our storytelling tradition."

How should Ms. Alvarez deal with Brianna's behavior without offending her family or disregarding their cultural traditions? Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) offer a four-step process that can help teachers to build relationships with families through cultural reciprocity.

1. We must identify our own beliefs, values, and expectations that lead us to view the behavior as problematic. By doing so, Ms. Alvarez would realize that, like many teachers, she expects students to remain quiet during teacher-directed activities and that she views interruptions as inappropriate and off-task behavior.
2. We need to establish whether the family shares these values and expectations, and how their views may be different from our own. Ms. Alvarez would realize that the parents do not share her concern. She would also be sure to find out how they feel about her classroom expectations for Brianna.
3. We should make sure that parents understand the underlying cultural basis for our perspective, while honoring and respecting the cultural differences that have been identified. Ms. Alvarez would recognize that Brianna's interruptions demonstrate that she is paying attention. She would explain that students are expected to demonstrate that they are paying attention by listening quietly, and to wait to be called on to participate.
4. Through dialogue and collaboration with the family, we should identify ways to adapt our interpretations to accommodate the value system of the home. Ms. Alvarez might decide that she will accept a few interjections during storytelling. Similarly, Brianna's parents may be willing to set aside time to practice the storytime routines of school with their daughter while maintaining their tradition at other times.

For follow-up questions about understanding disabilities and cultural reciprocity, go to Chapter 3 of the Companion Website (ablongman.com/sppd4e) and click Diversity Forum.

sonnel must put aside any preconceived notions they may have about various lifestyles and work with students' families to develop and implement the most effective programs for the students. Finally, professionals should adopt a family systems perspective to involve the whole family—rather than just the child—in efforts to enhance programs (Wehmeyer et al., 1999).

Families and Children with Disabilities

The arrival of any child results in changes in family structure and dynamics. Obviously, children change the lives of the mother and father, and each child alters the dynamics of the family unit, including finances, the amount and quality of time parents can devote to individual children, the relationship between the husband and wife, and family's future goals.

The arrival of a child with a disability exacerbates the challenges that such changes bring. When a child with a disability becomes a member of the family, whether through birth, adoption, or later onset of the disability, the entire family must make adjustments. The almost immediate financial and emotional impact can create major problems for family members, including siblings.

While all children present challenges to parents, a number of critical problems may face families when the child has a severe disability. These include such challenges as expensive medical treatment, expensive equipment, recurring crisis situations, stress on marriages, and limited respite care services (Allen, 1992).

In addition to these problems, a primary difficulty may be accepting and understanding the child and the disability. Parents with a limited understanding of a diagnosis will probably have difficulty in developing realistic expectations of the child, possibly creating major problems within the family. On one hand, parents might not understand the

CONSIDER THIS

What are some problems faced by families following the birth of a child with a disability or the identification of a child's disability?

nature of a learning disability and therefore accuse the child of being lazy and not trying. On the other hand, parents may overlook the potential of students with mental retardation and develop low expectations that will limit the child's success. For example, parents of adolescents might not support a school-work program for their son or daughter because they believe that adults with retardation are not capable of holding a job.

Families who discover that their child has a disability may have a variety of reactions. These responses may include the following (adapted from Smith, 1997):

▶ *denial:* "This cannot be happening to me, to my child, to our family."
▶ *anger:* An emotion that may be directed toward the medical personnel involved in providing the information about the child's problem or at a spouse because of the tendency to assign blame.
▶ *grief:* An inexplicable loss that one does not know how to explain or deal with.
▶ *fear:* People often fear the unknown more than they fear the known. Having the complete diagnosis and some knowledge of the child's future prospects can be easier than uncertainty.
▶ *guilt:* Concern about whether the parents themselves have caused the problem.
▶ *confusion:* As a result of not fully understanding what is happening and what will happen, confusion [may reveal] itself in sleeplessness, inability to make decisions, and mental overload.
▶ *powerlessness:* [The feeling may relate to the parents' inability to] change the fact that their child has a disability, yet parents want to feel competent and capable of handling their own life situations.
▶ *disappointment:* [The fact that] a child is not perfect may pose a threat to many parents' egos and a challenge to their value system.
▶ *acceptance:* The child has needs to be met and has value as a member of the family. (pp. 2–3)

Although it cannot be assumed that all or even most parents have these particular reactions, many must deal with complicated emotions, often experienced as a "bombardment of feelings" that may recur over many years (Hilton, 1990). Sileo, Sileo, and Prater (1996) refer to the "shattering of dreams" that underlies many of these feelings. School personnel, including teachers, school social workers, counselors, and administrators, need to be aware of these dynamics and be prepared to deal with family members who are experiencing various feelings. For example, when parents say that they feel guilt after learning that their child has a disability, school personnel should listen with acceptance to the parents and help them understand the nature of the disability and the fact that they are not responsible for it. The Personal Spotlight provides a vivid portrait of the reactions of one family to these emotions.

CONSIDER THIS

As a teacher, how could you deal with families experiencing various reactions to a child with a disability? What role, if any, should a teacher play in helping parents work through their reactions?
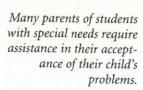
TEACHING TIP

Teachers need to be aware of the different reactions that parents may have and know some specific strategies for dealing with these reactions.

Many parents of students with special needs require assistance in their acceptance of their child's problems.

Personal Spotlight

A Mother's Perspective

We have a beautiful, vibrant, intelligent, and mischievous 6-year-old little girl, Kayla, who is a big sister to our 19-month-old son, Joey, a boy who lights up the room with his blond hair, blue eyes, and brilliant smile. When I was pregnant with Joey, the doctors grew concerned about his prenatal growth and delivered him three weeks early. The delivery was uneventful, and I held my 4-pound 15-ounce baby boy in my arms as my husband and I decided upon a name. When it came time to visit my son in the nursery, however, he was not there and had been transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). And so begins our "story." He stayed in the NICU for one week. Leaving the hospital without my son was the beginning of the emotional roller coaster on which I have found myself a passenger.

Joey was released with a clean bill of health and a huge sigh of relief; however, I noticed a difference in my son as compared to my daughter. His arm had a tendency to arbitrarily jerk, and he didn't move quite as fluently as other babies. Because of time spent in the NICU, coupled with his prematurity, Joey was scheduled for a three-month checkup at the neonatal clinic. It was there that my suspicions were confirmed —Joey showed signs of developmental delay, and as he grew older, the gap between his chronological and developmental age widened.

Sixteen months and what seems like a million tests after his first check up, the doctors remain unable to determine what caused his delays, so they have labeled him with a mild form of cerebral palsy. To me this means that Joey will have to work harder to do what comes naturally to many others. It took my son 10 months to learn to sit, 14 months to stand, and 16 months to crawl. Now, at 19 months, he is able to walk behind an object while pushing it across the floor. Joey cannot speak, but he babbles incessantly and loudly! Kayla has sisterly intuition; she dotes on her baby brother and always seems to understand what he is communicating. She realizes that her brother is different, although she does not fully comprehend why he cannot do the things that the other children his age can do. When Joey reaches a milestone, Kayla is equally as excited as we are, as each milestone reached brings him one step closer to playing with her as a toddler who is not disabled might.

Accepting that my son is different has been both easy and difficult. There are moments when I look at him and forget that he has a disability, yet there are times when his imperfections glare at me from behind his sweet smile. My heart aches when I think of the teasing he will encounter from the mouths of unmerciful children who know no better. I worry about how my daughter has been affected by her brother's disability; have I been remiss in showing an equal amount of attention to both children?

I have learned a great deal from my son. I detect a sense of determination that is not often found in people. It is at these moments that I mentally pledge to do everything in my power to foster this determination and optimism, as these are the qualities that will assist him in overcoming any obstacles, whether physical, mental, or emotional. It is because of my son that I have converted from a "glass half-empty" point of view to a "glass half-full" approach.

I also have learned how to be a better friend, knowing when to keep quiet and when to offer advice. I have become more patient and tolerant of others, although I continue to find myself becoming frustrated with the endless questions and constant probing into my personal life—it is not easy to open your heart and your home to strangers (e.g., doctors, therapists, early intervention personnel).

Raising a child with a disability has also strengthened my marriage. My husband and I have leaned on each other for emotional support on numerous occasions. He has validated my feelings, assuring me that he, too, feels the same myriad of emotions. One of the hardest aspects of dealing with Joey's disability is believing that I am a bad parent for feeling certain emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment). Understanding that these emotions are normal, and even acceptable, and felt by others brings a great sense of relief.

I thank God every day for the life and the family he has given me. I love my husband more than I can express, yet somehow, some way, I love my children even deeper. Where others may feel sorry for my family or my son, I feel proud that I have two children who will understand firsthand that being different is not something of which to be ashamed but rather to embrace. Thank you for allowing me to share my story with you.

Tracey Corriveau and Family *Lynchburg, VA*

For follow-up questions about this Personal Spotlight, go to Chapter 3 of the Companion Website (ablongman.com/sppd4e) and click Personal Spotlight.

Some models of potential parental reactions reflect a **stage theory** approach to understanding these responses (i.e., a series of presumed phases in response to learning that a child has a disability). However, parental responses rarely follow any formal stage process (e.g., shock-denial-anger-rejection-acceptance). Rather, the preceding reactions more often reflect responses that individual parents *may* experience when accepting the fact that they have a child with a disability and that they need to meet that child's needs. For example, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who originated the stage theory in her book *On Death and Dying* (1969), discovered that stages can be skipped or a person can become "stuck" in a single stage.

School personnel need to support family members' acceptance of children with disabilities. This effort begins with assisting parents in understanding the needs of their child; at the same time, the educator should listen to the parents in order to better understand the child from their perspective. Further, teachers must be sensitive to the fact that many parents do not see the school as a welcoming place for various reasons (e.g., problems the parents experienced as students themselves, negative responses communicated to them as advocates for their child).

Summarizing previous research on the topic of support for parents, Wilson (1995) lists the following guidelines regarding what parents want and need from professionals:

▶ To communicate without jargon or to have terms explained
▶ Conferences to be held so both parents can attend
▶ To receive written materials that provide information to assist them in understanding their child's problem
▶ To receive a copy of a written report about their child
▶ Specific advice on how to manage the specific behavior problems of their children or how to teach them needed skills
▶ Information on their child's social as well as academic behavior (p. 31)

Parents' Views on Inclusion

Many parents struggle with the issue of school inclusion. Educators remain divided on the implementation aspects of school inclusion, as do parents and parents' groups. On the one hand, some parents of students with learning disabilities (such as those represented by the Learning Disabilities Association) have remained cautious about inclusion; on the other hand, the Arc (1995) (formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens) has actively favored it. Fisher, Pumpian, and Sax (1998) noted, "The success and enhancement of any educational program depends on the attitude and involvement of many stakeholders, including parents, in its design and renewal" (p. 179).

In an enlightening study of parental views of inclusion, Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson (2001) surveyed 460 parents of children with severe disabilities. The comments of the parents are quite informative. (Selected comments are included in Table 3.2.) Overall, they show that teachers should be sensitive to the fact that individual parents and groups of parents may have quite different views of the benefits of inclusionary educational practices, and teachers should involve these parents in discussions related to the development of the most effective programs for their children. When inclusion is perceived as successful by parents, a strong working relationship can be created.

Involvement of Fathers

Frequently when people say that families should be involved in a child's education, the "family" is defined as the child's mother. The involvement of the entire family should be the primary goal, but the father is often left out of the planning process. Governmental research indicates that fathers are only half as likely to be highly involved in their child's special education program (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). This report also concluded (U.S. Department of Education, 1997):

▶ Children are more likely to get [good grades] and are less likely to repeat a grade if their fathers are involved in their schools.
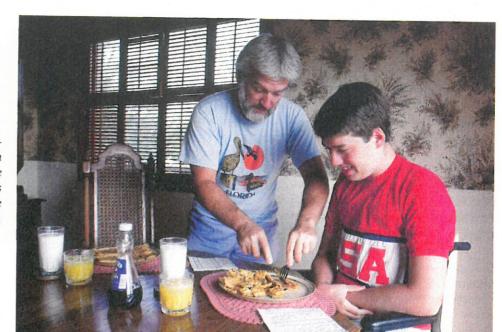
- Children do better in school when their fathers are involved, regardless of whether their fathers live with them and whether their mothers are also involved.
- Many fathers in two-parent families, as well as fathers not living with their children, have low involvement.
- The relationship between fathers' involvement and children's success in school is important, regardless of income, race/ethnicity, or the parent's education. (p. 3)

Hietsch (1986) described a program to encourage fathers to get involved in the educational program of their child. The program focuses on Father's Day, when the fathers of children in the class are invited to participate in a specific activity. However, teachers need to be sensitive to single-parent (i.e., mother only) homes in arranging such events. The inclusion of a grandfather or an uncle may be a good alternative.

TABLE 3.2　　Written Statements by Parents Explaining Why They Are or Are Not Supportive of Inclusive Placement

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1. Statements reflecting parental support for inclusion:
   - The "special education" program is very limiting and acts to confine people to "expected limitations" closing the door to the ability or opportunity to learn because they are not expected to or thought able.
   - My son has recently in the past 6 months improved his language, and he's using more words, and I know he will do better mainstreamed in a "regular" classroom.
   - I also feel the program she is in through the county isn't enough, she isn't challenged . . . she is in a class with others that have such low skills that she is bored or ignored.
   - Lots of kids I see are working down to someone's level when they would blossom in a more demanding environment.
   - Teaches nondisabled children to be sensitive to other children who do not have the same capabilities.
   - I see mainstreaming as a plus, and both sides benefit—besides getting a great education in the triumphs and difficulties of life.
   - I am adamantly opposed to any segregation by disability or ability because the situation created . . . is not representative of the society their children will live to grow up and eventually work in.

2. Statements reflecting parental rejection of inclusion.
   - Jennifer has many medical conditions that I feel need a special classroom and teacher. She will never learn to take care of herself. I feel she needs to be in a protective class.
   - My child would be stuck in her wheelchair most of the day, unless the classroom were completely modified with carpet, and room to move. A lot of special equipment would be needed.
   - Until she can communicate expressively, she does not need inclusion. She has cerebral palsy and can't verbalize or sign so others can understand.
   - It would be extremely difficult for a teacher to take care of regular students, let alone students with severe disabilities, even with help.
   - Regular classrooms are so overbooked with students already that are struggling to learn, that neither the student nor the teacher needs the additional . . . diversion of a severely disabled child.
   - Our 13-year-old is attention deficit. His teachers have been at their wit's end with him year after year. How will they help my autistic son?
   - This has got to be an expense that most parents of regular schoolchildren would resent.
   - Most severely disabled children . . . need to learn living skills so as to survive in the outside world. Vocational training and independent living training are more necessary than what is taught in the regular classroom.
   - My child is 14 years old, and I don't think he is capable of learning academic subjects at a 9th grade level, nor would that be particularly helpful. He needs to learn to behave appropriately, speak as much as possible, get along with others, and be as independent as possible.
   - I also think that she needs to see other children that are having the same level of instruction so that she won't feel that she is the only one that needs special attention, and she needs to be around children that can relate to what she is dealing with.

Adapted from "Taking Sides: Parent Views on Inclusion for Their Children with Severe Disabilities" by D. S., Palmer, K., Fuller, T., Arora, & M. Nelson, 2001, *Exceptional Children, 67*, pp. 474–479.

A father's direct involvement with his child with disabilities increases the child's chance for success in school and in the community.

Involvement of Siblings

Like adults, siblings are important in developing and implementing appropriate educational programs. Because over 10% of the school population is identified as disabled, the number of children with siblings who are disabled is significant: a working estimate of 15–20% or more seems realistic. Although not all siblings experience adjustment problems, some doubtlessly have significant difficulties responding to the disability. Nevertheless, these siblings have a unique opportunity to learn about the diversity of individual needs.

Meyer (2001) summarized the literature and noted these areas of concern expressed by siblings:

▶ A lifelong and ever-changing need for information about the disability or illness.
▶ Feelings of isolation when siblings are excluded from information available to other family members, ignored by service providers, or denied access to peers who share their often ambivalent feelings about their siblings.
▶ Feelings of guilt about having caused the illness or disability, or being spared having the condition.
▶ Feelings of resentment when the child with special needs becomes the focus of the family's attention or when the child with special needs is indulged, overprotected, or permitted to engage in behaviors unacceptable by other family members.
▶ A perceived pressure to achieve in academics, sports, or behavior.
▶ Increased caregiving demands, especially for older sisters.
▶ Concerns about their role in their sibling's future. (p. 30)

One way some schools involve siblings of children with disabilities is through **sibling support groups** (Summers, Bridge, & Summers, 1991). In addition to disseminating basic information about disabilities, these groups provide a forum in which children share experiences with other children who have siblings with disabilities. Like parent support groups, sibling groups help children cope with having a brother or sister with a disability. Understanding that similar problems exist in other families, as well as learning new ways to deal with them, helps siblings.

CONSIDER THIS

The recent emphasis on family (rather than parental) involvement reflects the importance of siblings and others in supporting the child. Is it a good idea to include siblings in the education of a brother or sister with a disability? Why or why not?

▶ Parents and service providers have an obligation to proactively provide brothers and sisters with helpful, age-appropriate information.

▶ Provide siblings with opportunities to meet other siblings of children with special needs. For most parents, "going it alone" without the benefit of knowing another parent in a similar situation is unthinkable. Yet, this happens routinely to brothers and sisters. Sibshops (workshops for siblings) and similar efforts offer siblings the same common-sense support that parents value.

▶ Encourage good communication with typically developing children. Good communication between parent and child is especially important in families where there is a child with special needs.

▶ Encourage parents to set aside special time to spend with the typically developing children. Children need to know from their parents' deeds and words that their parents care about them as individuals.

▶ Parents and service providers need to learn more about siblings' experiences. Sibling panels, books, newsletters, and videos are all excellent means of learning more about sibling issues.

FIGURE 3.1

Recommendations for Siblings

Adapted from "Meeting the Unique Concerns of Brothers and Sisters of Children with Special Needs" by D. Meyer, 2001, *Insight, 51*(4), p. 31.

Building on his analysis of the challenges, concerns, and opportunities for siblings of a child with a disability, Meyer (2001) provided a series of recommendations to alleviate concerns and to enhance opportunities; these are presented in Figure 3.1.

Several additional suggestions can enhance the positive benefits of involving siblings:

1. Inform siblings of the nature and cause of the disability.
2. Allow siblings to attend conferences with school personnel.
3. Openly discuss the disability with all family members.

Parent Education

Many educators believe parents of children with disabilities benefit tremendously by attending parent education classes. One reason is that parents too frequently attribute normal and predictable misbehavior to a child's disability rather than to the age and stage of a child. Seeing that all parents face similar challenges with their children can be both comforting and empowering to parents (West, 2002). Some helpful hints parents learn through parent education include the following (from West, 2002):

1. Never compare children.
2. Notice the improvements and accomplishments of each child in the family, and always reinforce the positive.
3. Hold family meetings that allow children a weekly opportunity to voice their concerns, accept chores, and plan enjoyable family nights and outings.
4. Learn to help children become responsible by the use of logical and natural consequences rather than using punishment or becoming permissive.
5. Spend special time alone with each child in the family. Be sure that no child feels lost or left out because others require more attention.
6. Plan family events that allow children to enjoy being together.
7. Reduce criticism and increase encouragement.
8. Be sensitive to the possibility that children functioning at a higher academic level in the family may be finding their place through perfectionism and a need to excel at all costs.
9. Invest time in your marriage. A strong marriage is important to your children's sense of well-being.
10. All families experience stress. The more stress is encountered, the more time they need together to share their feelings, plan ahead, solve problems mutually, and plan time to enrich relationships.

Home-School Collaboration

Educators and parents of children with disabilities must be partners in ensuring that appropriate education is available to children. In reality, parents should be seen as the "senior partners" because they are responsible for their child every day. In order to best meet the child's needs, classroom teachers, special education teachers, administrators, and support personnel need to be actively involved with families.

In working with parents of students with special needs, educators find that parents vary tremendously in knowledge and expertise about disabilities. Some parents may be well-versed in special education laws and practices and may have informed opinions that must be considered in effective instructional planning. Other parents may be limited in their knowledge and their understanding of special education law. In this case, educators are responsible to inform parents so that they can become effective advocates for their child and partners in educational programming. See the Rights & Responsibilities feature.

Although effective collaboration cannot be based on professionals' presumptions that they understand the way a parent feels, it is useful to consider the advice that parents give other parents in learning how to respond effectively to the needs of their child and also of themselves. Table 3.3 provides a summary of some parent-to-parent suggestions.

TEACHING TIP

When communicating with parents, avoid using educational jargon, including acronyms, that might be meaningless to parents.

Communicating with Parents

Many parents feel that too little communication takes place between themselves and the school. Perhaps this response is to be expected—approximately 50% of both general and special education teachers indicate that they have received no training in this area and consequently rate themselves as only moderately skilled (e.g., Buck et al., 1996; Epstein et al., 1996). This deficiency is particularly unfortunate because problems between parents and school personnel often can be avoided with proper communication by school

Rights & Responsibilities

Recommendations for Parental Involvement

In 2002 the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education released a report entitled "A New Era" that included two recommendations related directly to parents and family:

1. **Increase parental empowerment and school choice:**
   Parents should be provided with meaningful information about their children's progress, based on objective assessment results, and with educational options. The majority of special education students will continue to be in the regular public school system. In that context, IDEA should allow state use of federal special education funds to enable students with disabilities to attend schools or to access services of their family's choosing, provided states measure and report outcomes for all students benefiting from IDEA funds. IDEA should increase informed opportunities for parents to make choices about their children's education. Consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act, IDEA funds should be available for parents to choose services or schools, particularly for parents whose children are in schools that have not made adequate yearly progress under IDEA for three consecutive years.

2. **Prevent disputes and improve dispute resolution:**
   IDEA should empower parents as key players and decision-makers in their children's education. IDEA should require states to develop early processes that avoid conflict and promote individualized education program (IEP) agreements, such as IEP facilitators. Require states to make mediation available anytime it is requested and not only when a request for a hearing has been made. Permit parents and schools to enter binding arbitration and ensure that mediators, arbitrators, and hearing officers are trained in conflict resolution and negotiation.

For follow-up questions about this report, go to Chapter 3 of the Companion Website (ablongman.com/sppd4e) and click Rights & Responsibilities.

From "A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families" by the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, retrieved from www.ed.gov/inits /commissionboards/whspecialeducation/reports/intro.html

T ABLE 3.3 **Parent-to-Parent Suggestions**

- Seek the assistance of another parent of a child with a disability.
- Communicate feelings with spouse, family members, and significant others.
- Rely on positive sources in your life (e.g., minister, priest, rabbi, counselor).
- Take one day at a time.
- Learn the key terminology.
- Seek accurate information.
- Do not be intimidated by medical or educational professionals.
- Do not be afraid to show emotion.
- Learn how to deal with natural feelings of bitterness and anger.
- Maintain a positive outlook.
- Keep in touch with reality (e.g., there are some things that can be changed and others that cannot be changed).
- Find effective programs for your child.
- Take care of yourself.
- Avoid pity.
- Keep daily routines as normal as possible.
- Remember that this is your child.
- Recognize that you are not alone.

Adapted from "You Are Not Alone: For Parents When They Learn That Their Child Has a Disability," by P. M. Smith, 1997, *NICHY News Digest, 2,* pp. 3–5.

professionals. They should make a conscious effort to begin the year with a discussion of roles and responsibilities in terms of communication (Munk et al., 2001).

Wilson (1995) outlined the following principles of effective communication with the parents of students with disabilities:

- *Accept*: Show respect for the parents' knowledge and understanding, and convey a language of acceptance.
- *Listen*: Actively listen and make an effort to confirm the perceptions of the speaker's intent and meaning.

Teachers must communicate regularly with parents to keep them informed about their child's progress and needs.

▶ *Question*: Probe to solicit parents' perspectives. Often questions will generate helpful illustrations.

▶ *Encourage*: Stress students' strengths along with weaknesses. Find positive aspects to share, and end meetings or conversations on an encouraging note.

▶ *Stay directed*: Keep the discussions focused on the issues being discussed, and direct the parents to resources regarding concerns that lie beyond the teacher's scope.

▶ *Develop an alliance*: Stress that the parents and teachers share a common goal: to help the child. (pp. 31–32)

One additional recommendation complements these points:

▶ *Avoid defensiveness*: Because of life stresses, many parents may become frustrated with school personnel. Sometimes parents may without justification unload on teachers or administrators. Listen carefully. Avoid being defensive. Then assure parents that "we are all in this together."

TABLE 3.4   Making Positive Word Choices

Avoid	Use Instead
Must	Needs to
Lazy	Is motivated toward less helpful interests
Culturally deprived	Culturally different, diverse
Troublemaker	Disturbs class
Uncooperative	Needs to work more with others
Below average	Works at his (her) own level
Truant	Absent without permission
Impertinent	Disrespectful
Steals	Takes things without permission
Dirty	Has poor grooming habits
Disinterested	Complacent, not challenged
Stubborn	Has a mind of his or her own
Wastes time	Could make better use of time
Sloppy	Could be neater
Mean	Has difficulty getting along with others
Time and time again	Usually, repeatedly
Poor grade or work	Works below his (her) usual standard

Adapted from *Parents and Teachers of Children with Exceptionalities: A Handbook for Collaboration* (2nd ed., p. 82), by T. M. Shea and A. M. Bauer, 1991, Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Used by permission.

Effective communication must be regular and useful. Communicating with parents only once or twice per year, such as with IEP conferences, or communicating with parents regularly but with information that is not useful, will not facilitate meeting educational goals.

Communication between school personnel and parents does not have to be formal written communication. Effective communication can be informal, including telephone calls, written notes, e-mail, or newsletters. When communicating with parents, school personnel should be aware of how they convey messages. For example, they should never "talk down" to parents. They should also choose their words thoughtfully. Some words convey very negative meanings, while other words are just as useful in transmitting the message and are more positive. Table 3.4 lists words that should be avoided along with preferred alternatives.

When communicating with parents, school personnel should also be aware of cultural and language differences. Taking these factors into consideration enhances the quality of communication with family members.

Informal Exchanges   Informal exchanges can take place without preparation. Teachers may see a parent in the community and stop to talk momentarily about the student. Teachers should always be prepared to talk briefly to parents about their children but should avoid talking about confidential information, particularly in the presence of individuals who do not need to know about it. If the conversation becomes too involved, the teacher should request that it be continued later, in a more appropriate setting.

Parent Observations   Parents should be encouraged to visit the school to observe their children in the classroom. Although the parents' presence could cause some disruption in the daily routine, school personnel need to keep in mind that parents have a critical stake in the success of the educational efforts. Therefore, they should always feel welcome. If the teacher feels that one time would be better than another, this information should be conveyed to the parent. Also, both teacher and parents should realize that children tend to behave differently when being observed by parents.

Telephone Calls   Many teachers use telephone calls effectively to communicate with parents. Parents feel that teachers are interested in their child if the teacher takes the time to call and discuss the child's progress with the parent. Teachers should remember to call

TEACHING TIP

When talking with parents outside the school in an informal manner, avoid discussing items that are related to due-process requirements–they require that several individuals be present, and formal documents must validate the meeting.

when there is good news about the child as well as to report problems the child is experiencing. For example, teachers can make notes of positive behaviors and follow through with a call. Again, understanding the language and culture of the home is important when making telephone calls. Giving parents your home telephone number is an option that may reassure parents. Used appropriately, voice mail may enhance ongoing communication, especially when contact times are not mutually convenient.

Written Notes   Written communication to parents is also an effective method of communication. Teachers should consider the literacy level of the parents and use words and phrases that will be readily understandable. They should also be aware of the primary language of the home. Written communications that are not understood can be intimidating for parents. When using written communication, teachers should provide an opportunity for parents to respond, either in writing or through a telephone call.

Increasingly, e-mail offers opportunities for ongoing communication. The Technology Today feature provides some websites to use as a starting point. However, as Patton, Jayanthi, and Polloway (2001, p. 228) noted, "Although the use of new technologies [is] attractive in terms of their immediacy and efficiency, such use poses a dilemma, as a significant number of families may not have access to technology."

Home Visits   A home visit is the best way to get an understanding of the family. When possible, school personnel should consider making the extra effort required to arrange

CONSIDER THIS

Some teachers think that daily written communication with parents is too much for them to do. When might this form of communication be necessary, and is it a legitimate responsibility for teachers?

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

Websites for Families of Children with Disabilities

The Alliance	www.taalliance.org
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health	www.ffcmh.org
The Center for Law and Education	www.cleweb.org
Family Voices	www.familyvoices.org
National Down Syndrome Congress	www.ndsccenter.org
National Council on Independent Living	www.ncil.org
National Indian Child Welfare Association	www.nicwa.org
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education	www.ncpie.org
Fiesta Educativa	www.fiestaeducativa.org
National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments	www.spedex.com/napvi/
The Arc of the United States	www.thearc.org
Autism Society of America, Inc.	www.autism-society.org
Brain Injury Association of America	www.biausa.org
Epilepsy Foundation of America	www.efa.org
Learning Disabilities Association of America	www.ldanatl.org
Spina Bifida Association of America	www.sbaa.org
UCP national (aka United Cerebral Palsy)	www.ucpa.org

For follow-up questions about the websites of organizations for families with disabilities, go to Chapter 3 of the Companion Website (ablongman.com/sppd4e) and click Technology Today.

and make home visits. When visiting homes, school personnel need to follow certain procedures, including the following:

▶ Have specific information to deliver or obtain.
▶ If you need to meet with parents alone, find out if it is possible for the child to be elsewhere during the visit.
▶ Keep visits to an hour or less.
▶ Arrive at the scheduled time.
▶ Dress appropriately, but be sensitive to cultural variance (e.g., formal, professional dress may distance yourself from the family in some homes).
▶ Plan visits with another school system resource person.
▶ Be prepared to join the parents (or family) for something to eat if offered (declining may be perceived as an insult).
▶ Be sure to do as much listening as talking.
▶ Leave on a positive note. (adapted from Westling & Koorland, 1988)

Although home visits are an important option, there is a low "teacher acceptability" of this practice. General education teachers report that they consider home visits the least effective (and perhaps least desirable) alternative available to them in terms of home-school collaborations (Polloway et al., 1996). Among other possible concerns, home visits for a potentially large number of children simply may be unrealistic. They tend to be more common, and perhaps more effective, at the preschool level. However, this form of communication can be essential in some instances and can take on greater significance when parents decline invitations to visit the school.

Formal Meetings   Parent-teacher meetings and conferences provide an important opportunity for collaboration. As Patton et al. (2001, p. 228) indicated, "Conferences are called for one of three primary reasons: administrative purposes (e.g., assessment or eligibility issues); crisis situations (e.g., disciplinary actions); and routine progress reporting, which is typically held at the end of grading periods."

Under federal special education law, formal meetings include conferences to develop the individualized educational program (IEP), the individualized family service plan (IFSP), the individualized transitional plan (ITP) (see Chapter 16), and, as applicable, behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) (see Chapter 14). Regardless of the purpose of the meeting, school personnel should focus attention on the topics at hand. They should send advance information home (e.g., a week before the meeting) to parents and make them feel at ease about their participation. Directing their attention to academic, social, and transitional goals before such meetings enhances their participation.

When preparing to meet with parents to discuss children who are experiencing problems, school personnel need to anticipate the components of the discussion in order to have a successful meeting. Figure 3.2 provides typical questions raised at such conferences.

School personnel must take steps to ensure parental involvement in their children's education program.

FIGURE 3.2   **Common Questions Asked by Parents and Teachers**

QUESTIONS PARENTS MAY ASK TEACHERS

- What is normal for a child this age?
- What is the most important subject or area for my child to learn?
- What can I work on at home?
- How can I manage her behavior?
- Should I spank?
- When will my child be ready for community living?
- Should I plan on her learning to drive?
- Will you just listen to what my child did the other day and tell me what you think?
- What is a learning disability?
- My child has emotional problems; is it my fault?
- The doctor said my child will grow out of this. What do you think?
- Will physical therapy make a big difference in my child's control of his hands and arms?
- Have you become harder on our child? Her behavior has changed at home.
- Can I call you at home if I have a question?
- What is the difference between delayed, retarded, and learning disabled?
- What kind of after-school activities can I get my child involved in?
- Can my child live on his own?
- What should I do about sexual activity?
- What's he going to be like in five years?
- Will she have a job?
- Who takes care of him when I can no longer care for him?
- What happens if she doesn't make her IEP goals?

QUESTIONS TEACHERS SHOULD ASK PARENTS

- What activities at home could you provide as a reward?
- What particular skill areas concern you most for inclusion on the IEP?
- What behavior at home do you feel needs to improve?
- Would you be interested in coming to a parent group with other parents of my students?
- When is a good time to call you at home?
- May I call you at work? What is the best time?
- Is there someone at home who can pick the child up during the day if necessary?
- Would you be interested in volunteering in our school?
- What is the most difficult problem you face in rearing your child?
- What are your expectations for your child?
- How can I help you the most?
- What is your home routine in the evenings? Is there a quiet place for your child to study?
- Can you or your spouse do some special activity with your child if he or she earns it at school?
- Can you spend some time tutoring your child in the evening?
- Would you like to have a conference with your child participating?
- When is the best time to meet?

Adapted from *The Special Educator's Handbook* (pp. 208–209), by D. L. Westling and M. A. Koorland, 1988, Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Used by permission.

To increase parental participation in formal conferences, school personnel may wish to consider whether parents should have an advocate present at formal conferences. The advocate could be a member of the school staff or, in some cases, will be privately contracted by the parents. An advocate can facilitate parental participation by enhancing communication, encouraging parental participation, and providing them a summary of the discussions and decisions at the end of the conference. State regulations govern this practice; teachers should consult with administrative colleagues concerning this practice.

IEP Meetings   Parents should be involved in the development of students' individualized education programs for two reasons. First, IDEA requires that parents be invited to participate in the development of the child's IEP and must "sign off" on the completed IEP (see Chapter 4 for information on the IEP content and process).

The more important reason for involvement, however, is to gain the input of parents. Parents know more about their children than school personnel do. They have been involved with the child longer, and beyond the hours of a school day. Schools need to take advantage of this knowledge about the child in the development of the IEP.

In facilitating exchanges between school personnel and parents, deBettencourt (1987) suggests the following:

1. Hold conferences in a small location that is free from external distractions (e.g., student or staff interruption, cell phones).
2. Hold conferences on time and maintain the schedule; do not let conferences start late or run late because many parents may be taking time off from work to attend.
3. Arrange the room so that parents and school personnel are comfortable and can look at one another without barriers.
4. Present information clearly, concisely, and in a way that parents can understand.

IFSP Meetings   Public Law 99–457 significantly altered the relationship between families and agencies serving young children with disabilities. The law required that agencies serving preschool children develop an IFSP for each child and his/her family. The IFSP requirement is based on the assumption that families cannot be as effective in a child's intervention program if their own needs are not being met. Thus the IFSP takes family needs (e.g., respite care, transportation) into consideration and provides strategies that can help solve some of the family's problems while delivering services to children with disabilities.

Mediation   The legal requirements concerning the involvement of parents in their child's education provide a foundation for appropriate practices in home-school collaboration. Nevertheless, even when careful efforts at compliance are made by school personnel and when educators attempt to fulfill both the letter and spirit of the law, some conflicts are inevitable in such an emotionally charged area as the determination of an appropriate education for a student with a disability. Many state and local education agencies use **mediation** to resolve disagreements between parents and school personnel. In mediation, the parties both share their concerns and then work to develop a solution that is mutually acceptable, typically through the facilitation of a third party.

Mediation can be a common-sense method of working through conflicts by establishing an environment in which parents and educators can develop a consensus regarding a child's educational program (Dobbs, Primm, & Primm, 1991). If effective, a mediation process can also result in the avoidance of the active involvement of legal representation, the subsequent cost of attorney fees, and the potential for an adversarial relationship developing as a result of due-process hearings.

Cross-Cultural Considerations   A particularly sensitive area for teachers is working with families from another cultural background. Parents, for example, may have a different view than the teacher about issues such as the nature of a presenting problem or the preferred solution. One suggestion for dealing with these challenges is a four step, two-way communicative process to share information and establish reciprocity across cultures.

Step 1: Identify the cultural values that are embedded in your interpretation of a student's difficulties or in the recommendation for service. Ask yourself which values underlie your recommendation. For many of us, the values of equity, independence, and individuality are central to our recommendation. Next, analyze your experiences that contributed to these values. Consider the roles of nationality, culture, socioeconomic status, and professional education in shaping your values. (Note that within some cultures, families may perceive relationships as more important than school achievement.)

Step 2: Find out whether the family being served recognizes and values your assumptions, and if not, how their view differs from yours.

Step 3: Acknowledge and give explicit respect to any cultural differences identified, and fully explain the cultural basis of your assumptions.

Step 4: Through discussion and collaboration, set about determining the most effective way of adapting your professional interpretations or recommendations to the value system of this family. (Harry, cited in *Research Connections*, 2001, p. 4)

Common Concerns   The preceding discussion highlighted vehicles for effective communication between teachers, other school personnel, parents, and other family members. Note the value for teachers in anticipating possible concerns that parents may express about their child's education. Table 3.5 identifies three domains of possible concerns of

TABLE 3.5   **What Do Parents Want?**

What Do Parents Want for Their Children?	*What Do Parents Expect of Teachers?*	*What Do Parents Expect of Schools?*
Personal and Social Adjustment "To belong to more groups." "More socialization." "To open up a little bit so he can learn to mix and mingle more."	**Personal Characteristics** "Enjoy what they are teaching." "Love what they are doing." "Be enthusiastic." "Be open-minded, friendly, and down-to-earth." "Be caring and patient."	**Responsibility and Independence** "Help them make decisions." "Train them to be self-sufficient." "[Help] them handle a checking and savings account."
Accommodation and Adaptation "One-to-one learning environment for academics." "More hands-on learning." "Sometimes the test should be given verbally."	**Accountability and Instructional Skills** "Evaluate themselves instead of turning to outside sources to evaluate what they are doing." "Direct the students toward resources and information that can further their studies."	**Academic and Functional Literacy** "[Help them] meet certain proficiency requirements to get their high school degree or whatever." "Prepare him to go on to [further education]."
Responsibility and Independence "To buckle down and study [to get better grades]." "To learn to finish his tasks." "To be able to set limits with people she goes out with [when she is on her own]."	**Management Skills** "Make [students] follow through with assignments." "Be very well-organized." "Be fair in remediating disputes between students."	**Supportive Environment** "Keep kids interested [in learning]." "Provide an atmosphere for learning." "[Provide an environment] where they feel safe and respected. . . . Warmth is important."
Academic and Functional Literacy "To read better." "To get every opportunity to learn what he should know . . . and continue to progress every year."	**Communication** "Consider parents as part of a team for learning." "Keep in touch with parents at times other than IEP meetings."	
Supportive Environment "A sense of accomplishment, success." "A positive environment." "Constant encouragement to stick to the tasks he is [working] on."		

Adapted from "Parents' Perspectives on School Choice," by C. M. Lange, J. E. Ysseldyke, and C. A. Lehr, 1997, *Teaching Exceptional Children, 30*(1), pp. 17–19.

parents: expectations for their child, expectations of schools, and expectations of teachers. These examples provide a picture of ways in which teachers can anticipate and respond to parents effectively.

Home-Based Intervention

Families can become involved with the education of a family member with a disability through home-based intervention. For preschool children, home-based services are fairly common; however, parents less frequently provide instruction at home for older students. Nevertheless, such support can be very beneficial to all students with disabilities.

Parents and other family members at home can get involved in the student's educational program by providing reinforcement and instructional support, as well as by facilitating homework efforts. At the same time, teachers should be sensitive to the numerous roles parents must play in addition to supporting their child with special needs. The purpose of this section is to briefly outline some considerations in each of these three areas; elements of each are discussed further in Chapters 14, 15, and 16.

Providing Reinforcement and Encouragement

Most students with disabilities experience some failure and related frustration. This failure cycle becomes difficult to break, especially after it becomes established over several years. Reinforcing success is an important strategy to interrupt the failure cycle. Parents can work with school personnel to provide positive reinforcement and encourage students to strive for school success.

Parents are in an excellent position to provide reinforcement. They are with the child more than school personnel and are involved in all aspects of the child's life. As a result, parents can provide reinforcement in areas where a child most desires rewards, such as time with friends, money, toys, or trips. For many students, simply allowing them to have a friend over or stay up late at night on a weekend may prove reinforcing. School personnel do not have this range of reinforcers available to them; therefore, parents should take advantage of their repertoire of rewards to reinforce the positive efforts of students.

A special example of reinforcement is home-school contingencies, which typically involve providing reinforcement in the home that is based on the documentation of learning or behavioral reports from school. The basic mechanism for home-school contingencies is written reports that highlight a student's behavior with regard to particular targets or objectives. Two popular forms are daily report cards and passports.

Daily report cards give feedback on schoolwork, homework, and behavior. They range in complexity from forms calling for responses to simple rating scales to more precisely designed behavioral instruments with direct, daily behavioral measures of target behaviors. *Passports* typically take the form of notebooks, which students bring to each class and then take home daily. Individual teachers (or all of a student's teachers) and parents can make regular notations. Reinforcement is based both on carrying the passport and on meeting the specific target behaviors that are indicated on it (Walker & Shea, 1988). A comprehensive discussion of other specific reinforcement strategies is presented in Chapter 14.

Some overarching considerations will enhance reinforcement programs in the home. Discipline in the home involves two types of parental action: (1) imposing consequences for misbehavior and (2) reinforcement of positive behavior. Rushed and stressed parents frequently are better in one area than another. School personnel need to let parents understand that reinforcement of positive behaviors is crucial to a child's self-esteem and growth. To see a new positive behavior or achievement and fail to reinforce it is a form of neglect that is unintentional but damaging. Parents need to train themselves to see and to reinforce positive behaviors, attitudes, and achievements.

CROSS-REFERENCE

A description of the principles of reinforcement is presented in Chapter 14.

TEACHING TIP

Regardless of the format, the key element in home-school contingencies is ongoing, effective communication between school personnel and parents.