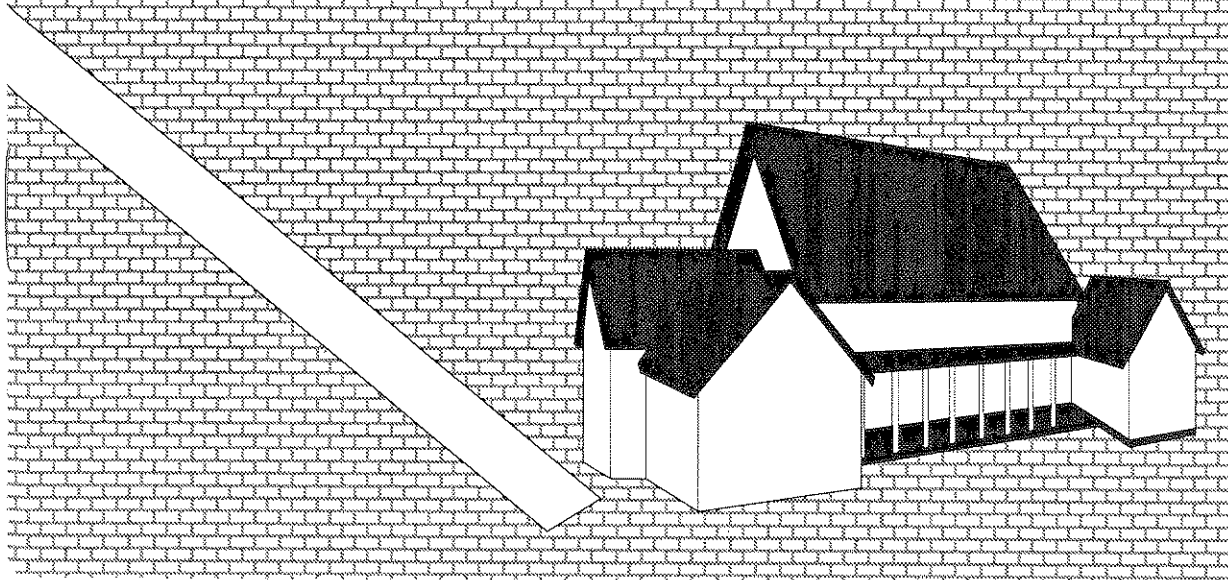


**THE
HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON
SCHEME**

SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

SANDRA RYAN



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**Educational Research Centre
St Patrick's College, Dublin**

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Foreword

It gives me considerable pleasure to receive the Educational Research Centre's Final and Summary reports on the three-year pilot phase of the Department's Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme. The reports are encouraging in their account of the developments and progress that have taken place already and of the foundations laid for future success in what is, essentially, a long-term preventative initiative. With the same dedication and creativity in local schools and communities which have been characteristic of the scheme to date, future progress will make real differences for children who would not otherwise have an equal chance in life.

The Educational Research Centre has completed a most difficult task in describing the complex web of relationships which exists in the home-school situation. Significant progress has been made and, while the task is still considerable, progress through short-term achievable goals will continue to bear fruit. The challenges are many and complex but the prize of children's development and fulfilment is worthy of the effort.

I wish to express my gratitude to the members of the National Steering Committee, both past and present, for their wisdom and advice, through the developmental stages of the scheme. In particular, I thank the National and local liaison co-ordinators for their enthusiasm, perseverance and dedication. Finally, I am very grateful to the very many teachers who are supporting and participating in the development of the scheme and to all the parents who make their own unique contribution so generously and enthusiastically.

Ní neart go cur le chéile,


Niamh Bhreathnach, T.D.,
Minister for Education

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE, 1990-1995

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* deceased, February 3, 1994

Ms Maria Somers	Assistant National Co-ordinator
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Ms Josephine O'Connor	Department of Education (Secretary to Committee)

* retired, June 13, 1994

Preface

Experience with the provision of additional funding to schools in disadvantaged areas led to a decision in 1990 on the part of the Department of Education to increase its resources for improving home-school relations. Based on feedback from schools about the operation of the existing scheme for schools in areas described as disadvantaged, it was decided to establish a pilot Home-School-Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme which would use school-based personnel to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning.

At the outset of the scheme, a National Steering Committee was set up 'to advise on aims, objectives, and arrangements for the establishment and monitoring of the project' (Department of Education, 1990). When the scheme was extended to second level in 1991, membership of the Committee was expanded to incorporate representatives of bodies involved in post-primary education.

Evaluation of the scheme was carried out by the Educational Research Centre. Much of the evaluation effort was directed towards the formation and development of programmes, and evaluation strategies were modified as the programmes developed. School principals and co-ordinators provided information in written form and, during visits to schools, interviews were conducted with principals, co-ordinators, teachers, parents, and pupils. Following analyses of HSCL activities during the first year, six schools were selected for more detailed study in subsequent years. Data on pupils' achievements in these schools were obtained to provide a baseline for later study of the impact of HSCL programmes. A sample of mothers who were involved in the HSCL scheme, as well as mothers who were not involved, was interviewed at the end of the second year.

In March 1994, a report on the evaluation of the HSCL scheme during its first three years of operation was completed. This document provides a summary of that report. The evaluation indicates that considerable movement took place towards the

achievement of the objectives of the HSCL scheme. Active co-operation between the home and school was enhanced; parents' awareness of their own capacities to contribute towards the educational progress of their children was increased; and links were established between schools and relevant community agencies. Furthermore, there was evidence that changes were taking place in schools to accommodate the needs of parents. Effects on pupils' achievements, if they occur, are likely to become apparent in the long term rather than in the short term.

The help and co-operation of local co-ordinators, school principals, teachers, parents, and pupils in the collection of data throughout the three years of the evaluation are gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are due to Carmel Lillis, Mary Stewart, Ann Jackson, Sister Frances Minahan, Mary Cunniffe, Aisling Gogarty, Séamus Massey, Brendan Gallagher, Michael Jackson, Tony O'Gorman, Carmel Clifford, and Séamus Doyle who were of particular assistance.

Sincere thanks to the members of the National Steering Committee for their input and, in particular, to the national co-ordinator for her ongoing co-operation during the course of the evaluation.

Many staff at the Educational Research Centre were involved at different stages in various aspects of the evaluation. Thanks to Thomas Kellaghan, Anna Gacquin, Mary Manning, Marian Hartnett, Michael Martin, Berni Dwan, Patricia Hanlon, Deirdre Stuart, Mary Rohan, Teresa Bell, and Hilary Walshe.

1. HOME BACKGROUND AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The relationship between home background factors and educational achievement has long been the subject of empirical enquiry. Binet in his pioneering work on intelligence testing at the turn of the century had noted a positive relationship between test performance and the occupation of children's parents. Since then, relationships between social class or socioeconomic status and children's scholastic performance have been documented in numerous studies (see White, 1982), including ones in Ireland (Greaney & Kellaghan, 1984; Kellaghan & Macnamara, 1972). Four major findings emerge. First, level of social class or socioeconomic status is positively but not very strongly related to a variety of measures of scholastic ability and achievement. Second, the effects of home differences are already in evidence when children start school and are reflected in children's preparedness to benefit from schooling. Third, the level of social class or socioeconomic status of a child's family is related to the length of time a child stays at school. And fourth, when curriculum options are available, there is a marked tendency for children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to follow academic-type curricula which lead to third-level education, while children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to enrol in technical, vocational, 'short-cycle,' or general educational courses (Kellaghan, 1994).

Over the past three decades, the interest of many investigators and policy makers has focused on those students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and perform poorly at school. Interest and concern developed for at least two reasons. First, the relatively poor performance in the educational system of children from certain socioeconomic backgrounds was seen as a failure to provide equality of educational opportunity, a principle to which most industrialized countries, including Ireland, subscribe today (see Greaney & Kellaghan, 1984; Ireland, 1992). A second reason

for the interest in and concern for low achievers was that their achievement was not just relatively poor compared to that of higher performing students but was absolutely poor. Many left school with very limited skills and went on to a life of dependency on state aid, unemployment, and sometimes crime. While these factors should not be related to low achievement in a simplistic way, there can be little doubt that a low level of scholastic achievement places students at an enormous disadvantage in the labour market. Students who do not take any public examinations are much more likely to be unemployed than students who are more successful in the educational system (Department of Labour, 1991). So also are students who perform poorly on such examinations (Hannan, 1992).

Various terms such as 'educationally disadvantaged,' 'marginalized,' and 'at risk' have been used to describe such students. The terms have been defined in various ways but most definitions imply a discontinuity between children's home and community experiences and the demands of schooling. An early definition regarded students as being disadvantaged if, because of sociocultural reasons, they entered the school system with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make adjustment difficult and impede learning (Passow, 1970). In more recent thinking it has been recognized that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children bring with them to school reflect the demands of their environments and should not be judged as being inferior to those required in school.

In the United States, disadvantaged children are likely to belong to a racial/ethnic minority group, to live in a poverty household with a single parent, to have a poorly educated mother, and to speak a home language that differs from that used in school (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989). It is obvious that these criteria would not all apply in the Irish situation. While it may be important to develop indicators for use in Ireland to help identify families, students, or areas that are likely to be disadvantaged, one should bear in mind that the presence of an indicator does not necessarily

imply disadvantage and, perhaps of even greater importance, that an indicator is not the cause of disadvantage.

While ethnic minority or language minority groups do not exist on the same scale in Ireland as in many other countries, at the same time, there can be little doubt that there are serious problems of disadvantage in the country. The *Investment in education* (1965) report drew attention to problems of inequality in the system though it did not specifically deal with the problem of disadvantage. Since the report was published, several studies have documented the particular problems of children living in disadvantaged areas (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977) and the early school drop-out and poor labour-market prospects of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Breen, 1991; Hannan, 1992; Hannan & Shortall, 1991).

Various attempts have been made in this country and elsewhere to deal with problems arising from disadvantage. In light of the relationship between home background and children's school performance, many of these attempts focused on the development of closer ties between homes and schools. If children are likely to suffer in their school learning when home and school differ in their approaches to life and learning, it would seem to make sense to promote home-school collaboration to achieve the shared objective of homes and schools in fostering children's development.

The development of closer ties between homes and schools has taken a variety of forms (see Bastiani, 1989; Comer, 1988; Levin, 1987; Macbeth, 1989; Slavin, 1989). Evaluations of such efforts indicate that helping parents become stronger partners in their children's learning can have a significant positive impact on parents themselves, as well as on children's cognitive development, school performance, and social functioning (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993). It was findings such as these, as well as other considerations that point to the key role of parents in their children's education, that led to the development in this country of efforts to increase parents' involvement in education.

Although one can find instances in all social and economic conditions in which homes and schools do not work in unison in promoting children's learning, a number of initiatives in Ireland have focused on children in schools in which relatively large numbers of pupils were experiencing educational difficulties. Not all of these initiatives were directed towards parents. For example, a limited number of schemes have provided children in need with food, school books, clothing, and footwear (see Carney, 1985).

In a scheme launched in 1984, additional funding was provided to schools in areas described as 'disadvantaged.' Indicators used to identify a disadvantaged area included numbers of children living in rented local authority housing, numbers of children whose parents were unemployed, numbers holding medical cards, and school inspectors' assessment of need (National Economic and Social Council, 1993). Under the scheme, grants were paid to schools for management costs, for the purchase of books and equipment, and for the development of home-school-community liaison.

Review of the operation of the scheme indicated that while the grants for books and equipment had proved very useful, the quality of home-school-community liaison activities which had been developed varied widely from school to school and, indeed, in some schools activities were not undertaken at all. Feedback from schools indicated that the adequate development of home-school-community relationships would require a teacher who would be assigned responsibility for this work. Schools' views of the nature of the home-school relationship indicated that the greatest perceived need was for parent education. There was less appreciation of the contribution which parents could make to their children's education or of the possibility that schools also might need to change. Schools, however, did express a wish to receive guidelines for their practice in the development of home-school-community relationships.

Apart from mainstream developments, a number of small-scale projects have also been carried out to help cope with problems arising from living in an area considered to be disadvantaged. The

first involved the establishment of a preschool in 1969 for three- to five-year old children in a disadvantaged area in central Dublin (Holland, 1979; Kellaghan, 1977). A major aim of the project was to assist children in developing their cognitive skills and so prepare them for the work of the primary school. While the project was primarily centre-based, efforts were made to involve parents. It was found that children (particularly those whose initial achievements were low) made good progress in acquiring school-related knowledge and skills during their two years in the preschool. However, in their early years in primary school, the children failed to keep pace with the achievements of children in the general population. A follow-up study of the later educational careers, labour-market experiences, leisure activities, and social deviance of preschool programme participants indicated that they stayed longer at school and were more likely to take a public examination than non-participants from the same geographical area. This was particularly true of girls (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1993).

An initiative for older students in disadvantaged areas is to be found in centres which house Youth Encounter Projects (YEPs). There are two such centres in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Limerick. Set up in the late 1970s, YEPs are intended to provide educational experiences for a small number (25 to 30) of students, aged between 10 and 16 years, who are unable to cope with the conditions of normal schools. Each centre has the services of a full-time community worker who liaises with students' homes and maintains contact with students after they leave the centre.

Other programmes outside the traditional educational system include Youthreach and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (see National Economic and Social Council, 1993).

2. THE HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY LIAISON (HSCL) SCHEME

Experience with the provision of additional funding to schools in disadvantaged areas led to a decision on the part of the Department of Education to increase its resources for improving home-school relations. When in the 1990 budget, £1.5 million (a trebling of the 1989 allocation) was made available for primary schools in disadvantaged areas, it was decided to use the money to support pilot Home-School-Community Liaison (HSCL) programmes which would use school-based personnel to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning.

Aims of the HSCL scheme

The aims of the HSCL scheme were developed during the first three years of its implementation. At the end of the 1992-93 school year, the scheme had five main aims.

- (i) To maximise active participation of the children in the scheme schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure.
- (ii) To promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.
- (iii) To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills.
- (iv) To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level, and their life-long attitudes to learning.
- (v) To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.

Basic principles

The HSCL scheme is based on the principle of partnership between schools, homes, and communities. The idea of partnership that is considered central to the scheme, also found in Pugh's (1989) approach, is defined as 'a working relationship that is characterized by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate. This implies a sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making and accountability' (Pugh, 1989, p.5).

In a document entitled *Home/School/Community Liaison: Basic principles* (Department of Education, 1993), the following principles governing the operation of the HSCL scheme were outlined:

The scheme consists of a partnership and collaboration of the complementary skills of parents and teachers.

The scheme is unified and integrated at both primary and post-primary levels.

The thrust of the scheme is preventative rather than curative.

The focus of the scheme is on the adults whose attitudes and behaviours impinge on the lives of children, namely, parents and teachers.

The basis of activities in the scheme is the identification of needs and having those needs met.

The development of teacher and staff attitudes in the areas of partnership and the 'whole-school' approach.

The scheme promotes the fostering of self-help and independence.

Home visitation is a crucial element in establishing bonds of trust with families.

Networking with and promoting the co-ordination of the work of voluntary and statutory agencies increases effectiveness and obviates duplication.

Home/school/community liaison is a full-time undertaking.

The liaison co-ordinator is an agent of change.

The promotion of community 'ownership' of the scheme through development of local committees.

Structure and personnel

The HSCL scheme was designed to operate through a number of structures and personnel: a National Steering Committee, a national co-ordinator, local co-ordinators, and local committees.

National Steering Committee

A National Steering Committee was established 'to advise on aims, objectives, and arrangements for the establishment and monitoring of the project' (Department of Education, 1990).

National Co-ordinator

The responsibility of the national co-ordinator as defined in *An explanatory memorandum for schools* (Department of Education, 1991) is as follows:

to advise, support and animate the local co-ordinators and the local committees, liaise with the local co-ordinators on an individual, local and school cluster basis and act as a liaison person between the cluster areas and the national steering committee of the pilot project.

At the beginning of the third year, after the scheme had been in operation in second-level schools for a year, an assistant national co-ordinator, with relevant experience in second-level education, was appointed to work with the national co-ordinator.

Local Co-ordinators

According to an initial job description, the aim of each local co-ordinator was 'to establish confidence, trust, mutual support and co-operation between parents and teachers, thereby enhancing perceptions and attitudes to the social, behavioural, and educational advantage of the children' (Department of Education, 1990).

In *An explanatory memorandum for schools* (Department of Education, 1991) circulated to schools involved in the HSCL scheme, the 'objective' of co-ordinators was stated as 'to reinforce the aspect of co-operation between home, school, and community in the educative process.'

Local Committee

The underlying philosophy of the HSCL scheme has been that programmes should be directly related to the needs of the area in which they are located. A representative local committee was identified as one source for determining the focus of programmes as well as being a forum for communication between parents, school staff, and members of community agencies. During the initial stages of the scheme, precise details about the nature and composition of local committees were left for decision to the National Steering Committee. It was decided that a local committee, representing the three groups - home, school, and community - would be established 'in each project area.' In some instances, a local committee may represent a small number of schools serving a defined geographical area while, in others, it may serve a wider area. The balance of membership should be divided equally between parents and representatives of voluntary and statutory agencies or services in the community.

The purposes of the local committee were outlined as follows:

- (i) To help co-ordinate the work of the various agencies in the area towards the purpose of developing home/school/community links.

- (ii) To enable parents as a group to have an input into the development of the project in their own area.
- (iii) To receive reports from the local co-ordinator and to advise her/him of specific community needs.
- (iv) To support the local co-ordinator as an important home/school/community resource.
- (v) To identify a group which would generate acceptance and support for new ideas and strategies.
- (vi) To ensure greater community 'ownership' of the project and wider community support for it.
- (vii) To participate in the ongoing evaluation of the various aspects of the project in its own area.
- (viii) To liaise with the National Steering Committee through the national co-ordinator.
- (ix) To set targets for partnership in the project in co-operation with local schools.
- (x) To comply with overall policy guidelines from the National Steering Committee.

The issue of local committees is one that has generated concern among some principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and local co-ordinators. A major source of the concern seems to have been a lack of understanding of the role and function of a local committee. Where committees have been successful, this has been attributed to the support of the school principal(s), to parent and community awareness of HSCL, and to the degree of co-operation and effort that characterized committee members. It would seem important that before setting up a local committee support and guidance should be sought and training in committee skills should be provided for members.

Participating Schools

Primary Schools. Schools in seven areas—five in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Limerick—were invited by the Department of Education, through the chairpersons of their Boards of Management, to participate in the HSCL scheme. Provision was

made for 30 posts of home-school-community liaison co-ordinators to be filled in 1990-91 by teachers seconded from their teaching posts for a three-year period. In all, 55 out of the 190 schools which were in the Department's disadvantaged schools scheme at the time became involved in the HSCL scheme. There were 18,600 children in the 55 schools (52,000 in the 190 schools). In May 1991, one further school was officially admitted to the scheme, bringing the total number of schools to 56 and the total number of home-school-community liaison co-ordinators to 31.

A further 24 schools (including schools from new areas in Galway and Waterford) entered the scheme in the 1991-92 school year bringing the total number of schools to 80 and the total number of co-ordinators to 45. During the course of the year, one of the schools that had entered the scheme in 1990-91 withdrew.

No additional primary schools entered the HSCL scheme in the 1992-93 school year.

Post-Primary Schools. The HSCL scheme was extended to post-primary schools with effect from November 1, 1991. Sixteen schools at post-primary level which serve families that are served by primary schools in the HSCL scheme (with one exception) were invited by the Department of Education to join the scheme. Participation in the scheme would mean that schools would have to designate a concessionary post in the school for HSCL work. Thirteen schools (in Dublin and Cork) accepted the invitation. Six were community colleges, two were vocational schools, three were secondary schools, and two were community schools.

An additional 13 post-primary schools (in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford) joined the HSCL scheme in the 1992-93 school year. Of these, two were community colleges, eight were secondary schools, and three were community schools. These schools were not included in the evaluation.

3. ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE HSCL SCHEME

All primary and post-primary schools had a number of basic structures in place to facilitate home-school relationships before the inception of the HSCL scheme. These included, for most schools, Boards of Management with parental representation, parent committees, open days, and parent-teacher meetings. In several schools, parents helped out with extra-curricular activities such as school concerts or sports days. However, they had very little involvement in activities closer to the learning-teaching situation. Parents seemed to have reasonable access to schools, especially at the point at which their children were entering the school. They were also informed of their children's school progress.

The fact that post-primary schools had a pastoral care structure and staff (chaplains) meant that they could sustain a wider range of contacts with homes than primary schools. For example, home visits were a feature of contacts at post-primary level but were rare at primary level. Post-primary schools also, particularly those in the vocational education sector, had greater contact with agencies outside the school (including community agencies) than primary schools for which such contacts were not common. This was partly a reflection of the fact that community contacts were more relevant to older children and also of the fact that vocational schools were embedded in a local authority structure which had responsibility for adult and community education as well as second-level education.

Despite the arrangements that were in place in schools to promote home-school contacts before the HSCL scheme began, it was recognized that more needed to be done. Some schools had relatively few structures or activities and all probably needed to expand the range of activities in which they were engaged. Further, the quality of home-school contacts in most cases could not be

regarded as entirely satisfactory and would not be judged to be based on the principles of partnership considered central to the HSCL scheme. For the most part, the role of parents was a relatively passive one, for some in the deliberations of governance and advocacy bodies, for the rest in receiving communications from the school about their children's school progress and behaviour. Besides, parents who become involved in governance and in helping out with extra-curricular activities are generally self-selected and may not at all be representative of the general parent body, much less of parents who may have little involvement in their children's formal education.

A consideration of the state of affairs relating to home-school relationships that existed before the commencement of the HSCL scheme indicated a need for the school to adopt a more proactive role in promoting home-school relationships. Three major approaches seemed appropriate. The first would involve increasing the variety and quantity of home-school contacts. Secondly, the quality of the contacts would need to be improved. In particular, there was a need to promote a more central and active role among parents in their children's education. Thirdly, there was a need to ensure that as great a number of parents as possible would be involved in home-school activities. This would no doubt require special efforts to target, in a more systematic and vigorous manner, parents who appeared to have little involvement and who might have difficulty in becoming more involved.

4. ACTIVITIES IN HSCL PROGRAMMES

One indication of how HSCL programmes were constructed and implemented in schools and in the community may be obtained by examining how co-ordinators spent their time. While the picture that emerges from this examination may not reflect the experiences of schools or of parents, it should provide information on the main thrust of programmes. When we examine primary school co-ordinators' use of time, we find that, on average, most time (31%) was devoted to parent courses and activities. This finding may be paralleled with the findings of a survey of parents carried out in six selected schools that, among parents who became involved in HSCL programmes, the most common activity was attendance at courses. Just over a quarter (26%) of co-ordinators' time was spent on home visits. Rather less time was devoted to meetings and contacts within the school with principals (7%), teachers (8%), and pupils (3%). Individual meetings with parents occupied 10% of time, while 9% of time was spent in contacting agencies or individuals in the community. The remaining time was spent on arranging funding for HSCL programmes (2%) and a variety of other activities (4%).

It will be noted that work with parents (either in school or in the home) took up two-thirds (67%) of co-ordinators' time. In contrast, only 15% of time was spent with teachers and 9% in community-related activities. It can be accepted on the basis of these data that concern with parents was the main preoccupation of co-ordinators and was directly related to two of the aims of the scheme. This may help to explain why some teachers did not think that programmes were sufficiently well integrated into schools or did not adequately address their immediate problems. The approach, however, was being faithful to the aims of the HSCL scheme to promote active co-operation between home and school and to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in

developing relevant skills. The procedures adopted to promote these aims would appear to have focused more directly on parents rather than on intervention in the general community.

When the precise courses and activities that primary schools offered in the second and third years of the operation of the HSCL scheme were examined, the most popular from the schools' point of view in both years were found to be ones directly related to children's education. Over 90% of schools in the second year were involved in such activities as providing classes in the children's school subjects in order to equip parents to help their children with homework. Parents also assisted in the classroom, in paired-reading programmes, in meetings, or in the library. While these activities were continued in the third year, the percentage of involved schools decreased to about 70. There was also a decrease in the number of schools offering self-development courses. However, the number of schools offering parenting, leisure courses (e.g., crafts, keep fit, swimming), and parents' education courses (e.g., computers, literacy) increased.

The parents' point of view, however, was somewhat different if the experience of parents in the six schools selected for special study is taken as representative of programmes as a whole. As we have just seen, attending courses would appear to have been the most salient feature of HSCL programmes for parents. Almost 80% of parents involved in programmes in the six schools attended courses, compared to 58% who attended school-based activities, and 41% who were engaged in classroom activities (an involvement which was most popular in junior level classes, i.e., up to second class). Parents in some schools managed structures for HSCL programmes (e.g., parents' room, crèche), and some parents organized activities such as swimming and art and craft classes for children. By the third year, parents in most schools were involved in recruiting others for courses and activities.

Differences between primary and post-primary schools in their organization, degree of differentiated staffing, and the stage of development of students would suggest that the development of HSCL programmes would take a different course and experience

different problems in post-primary schools than in primary schools. Post-primary schools already had personnel (guidance counsellors, chaplains, year heads/class tutors, and posts of responsibility) whose everyday work was likely to bring them into contact with parents, as well as with students, in both pastoral and academic contexts. Furthermore, vocational and community schools in the post-primary sector had a tradition of greater involvement with the community than is normal either in primary or in traditional secondary schools. The stage of development of students is also relevant in considering home-school relationships. By the time students reach the post-primary level, they are becoming increasingly independent of their parents, while parents, for their part, might feel that they have less control over, and less responsibility for, their children. Furthermore, at the post-primary level, the academic demands on students increase and are likely to be beyond the competence of many parents. Given these factors, it is unlikely that some approaches adopted at the primary level to improve home-school relationships, especially those for very young children, would be appropriate for young adolescent students.

It is perhaps surprising then that the pattern of activities at post-primary level was not greatly dissimilar to that at primary level. In both years in which HSCL programmes had been in operation, there was a heavy emphasis in post-primary schools on courses and activities for parents. These included courses in self-development, leisure, parenting, and parent education. It should be pointed out that access to tutors for such courses was easier at the post-primary level, where many tutors came from the VEC sector, than at the primary level. However, the involvement of parents in activities more directly related to their children's learning (e.g., reading programmes) was less common than in primary schools.

There was also less involvement of parents in classroom activity. Approximately half the staff interviewed in post-primary schools were sceptical about integrating parents into classroom work. About the same number, however, were open to this type of

parental involvement and thought that parents could assist in a variety of activities, including remedial work, practical subjects, and career guidance.

Home visits

Home visits were perceived to be central to the HSCL scheme at both primary and post-primary levels and were considered to be the most effective strategy to reach parents who had no other contact with the school. The main purposes of home visits were to deal with issues relating to children, to involve parents in HSCL activities, and to provide support for families. Visits were considered valuable in building relationships between co-ordinators and parents, in raising and maintaining the co-ordinator's profile in the community, and in providing a link between home and school for teachers. There was a great deal of variance in the amount of co-ordinators' time that was spent on home visits. During the third year of the scheme, primary school co-ordinators spent, on average, 26% of their time visiting homes.

5. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON SCHOOLS

It is clear that a major advantage of the HSCL scheme was in its provision of a co-ordinator to liaise with parents and the community outside the school. This was found to be a boon to teachers and, in many primary schools, the co-ordinator was able to facilitate contacts between teachers and parents. In most schools, the number of teachers who interacted with parents increased during the first three years of the scheme.

In a number of schools, school staff were perceived to have become more open and tolerant, both in dealings among themselves and in relation to parents. Some teachers who had resisted parent involvement in the classroom at an early stage now welcomed it. However, resistance to this idea continued among others.

In over four-fifths of schools, space was made available for HSCL activities and, in 60%, the school timetable was modified to accommodate and facilitate HSCL work and parent activities. In four out of five primary schools, co-ordinators reported a change in the school's role in the community. Schools had a higher profile and, in some cases, their contact with community agencies had grown.

At a general level, the HSCL scheme made teachers think about the role of parents in the school and in education. At a more specific level, it got growing numbers of teachers to think about how they might involve parents in the school or in the classroom. It would be supportive to the further development of home-school-community liaison if all teachers were now provided with a persuasive rationale about why parents should be in the school or in the classroom and what exactly they can contribute. Furthermore, parent involvement, particularly in the classroom, needs to be part of a well thought-out and structured programme which has been developed with considerable input from teachers themselves.

Several positive effects were perceived to flow from the HSCL scheme. With improved parent-teacher relations, teachers found that problems became easier to deal with and parents easier to contact. Teachers had an increased understanding of parents' backgrounds and of the difficulties they faced and a greater appreciation of parents' talents and abilities. Parents, in turn, found it easier to approach teachers. At least some teachers in more than half the schools involved parents in a variety of activities, from accompanying children to swimming to helping in classroom activities. However, in most schools in which such activities took place, only some teachers were involved.

For their part, teachers in more than half of primary schools also helped out with other HSCL activities. Again, it was more usual to find only some teachers in a school rather than all or most engaging in such activities. The implication of this is that care must be taken to avoid isolating teachers who are fearful of, or who are not involved in, HSCL programmes.

In general, the picture is one in which changes occurred in primary schools as a result of HSCL programmes. Furthermore, changes in teachers' attitudes towards parents — their role in the home and in the school — were more frequently positive than negative. However, there is variation between schools in the extent to which HSCL programmes had an impact on them, and even where there was an impact, it did not touch all teachers.

Despite differences in context, many of the reported effects on post-primary schools were very similar to those reported for primary schools. In general, teachers in post-primary schools were supportive of the HSCL initiative, saw it as improving parents' access to the school, and as enhancing positive attitudes to the school within the community. They also noted that it was now easier to contact parents, something which they welcomed. As at primary level, some staff provided evidence of their support for HSCL programmes by taking on extra duties to facilitate the work of the co-ordinator.

More than half the staff in post-primary schools were involved in a variety of school-based activities with parents, though this was

already a feature of schools before the initiation of HSCL programmes. However, during the course of the HSCL scheme, a majority of teachers said that they were prepared to expand these activities — meeting with parents, teaching adult education classes, and working with parents in extra-curricular activities. The time commitments which the activities would involve were, however, seen as likely to be problematic.

A striking effect of the extension of the HSCL scheme to post-primary schools was the development of links between primary and post-primary levels in the scheme and, in particular, of activities relating to the transition of students from primary to post-primary school. Primary teachers welcomed information about entrance requirements while post-primary teachers were glad to get information about incoming students. Parents were pleased that there would be some continuity in their involvement across both levels within the school system. Co-ordinators in primary and post-primary schools also co-operated in the provision of courses and activities for parents, and this usually resulted in a broadening of the range of available activities.

The main differences between both levels of the scheme related to the organization of schools. The existence of pastoral care structures at post-primary level gave co-ordinators access to a team of specialists (e.g., remedial teacher, guidance counsellor, chaplain, year heads) who often knew the backgrounds to students' problems. However, the number of teachers and their varying roles also created confusion among parents regarding who to contact about a problem or concern. Furthermore, because pupils at primary level are younger, co-ordinators tended to have more opportunities for contact with their parents.

6. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PARENTS

It is clear from the design of, and thinking behind, HSCL programmes that parents were perceived to occupy a key role in attaining programme objectives. It is thus of considerable interest to look at the impact of programmes on parents. It would be more accurate to speak of mothers than of parents. Given the potential influence of mothers on their children's educational development, it was reasonable that they should have been most involved. There was, of course, also the more practical consideration that it was more often mothers rather than fathers who came to the school. As a consequence, the data in this report refer almost exclusively to mothers.

The views of co-ordinators and teachers are in general agreement in seeing considerable benefit for mothers arising from HSCL programmes. In an increasing number of schools throughout the first three years of the scheme, and in the final year in all schools, parents' personal development was perceived to have benefitted from participation in HSCL programmes. Thus, sometimes based on comments made by parents themselves, the self-confidence, parenting skills, and home-management skills of parents were perceived to have improved. Benefits were seen to accrue primarily from involvement in courses. Information from parents in the six selected schools endorses the observations of co-ordinators. Parents described a number of benefits, including the development of a mutual support system among themselves and growth in self-confidence, as accruing to them from involvement in HSCL activities.

In a large majority of schools, parents' attitudes towards involvement in the school were perceived to have become more positive. Parents developed a new interest in what happened in school, came to the school more frequently, were more aware of the working of schools, talked more about educational issues, and

had a greater awareness of the classroom situation and of the problems of teachers.

Parents in some schools were beginning to show evidence of a growth in 'empowerment.' They became aware of the importance of their role in their children's education and began to feel that they had a say in what went on at school. Their attitudes to the school became more positive and they felt more at home in the school and in dealing with teachers. They asked if they could help without waiting to be asked and, in particular, volunteered for HSCL activities. They helped their children at homework following attendance at courses (for example, in reading) and in general felt comfortable about it. Finally, some parents felt confident enough to help in the classroom.

Practically all parents who had helped in the classroom reported such involvement as having conferred a variety of benefits. Parents learned more about the teacher's job, more about what being in the classroom is like for a child, and more about the problems teachers have to deal with. As a result, they found it easier to ask teachers questions, became familiar with ways of helping with their children's learning, and became more confident about providing such help.

While HSCL programmes were perceived in all primary schools to have had an impact on parents (at least in terms of general activities in the school), at the same time there were differences between parents in the degree to which their attitudes were perceived to have changed. Clearly also there were considerable differences between them in the extent to which they had become involved in HSCL activities. Some teachers thought that a core of parents had become involved and that these perhaps were the ones who least needed the support of a home-school scheme, while those most in need — parents with social or economic difficulties, parents with literacy problems, parents of troublesome children or of ones that were frequently absent from school, parents who lacked confidence in themselves — were not involved. Co-ordinators were very conscious of the need to target these parents, recognizing that parents in such difficult

circumstances required additional forms of support, usually from other agencies as well as from co-ordinators, to enable them to cope with their problems. Only when such immediate problems had been addressed could these parents be expected to engage in activities related to their children's education.

Some of the effects on parents at the post-primary level were very similar to those reported at the primary level: improved attitudes to school, greater trust of school personnel, increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings, and greater confidence in approaching the school and teachers. There was less evidence at the post-primary level, however, that parents were becoming more involved in the school-based activities of their children. This is perhaps not surprising given that most parents would not be familiar with much of the curriculum content of the post-primary school. One principal, however, thought that parents should be in a better position to help in the practical areas of homework, discipline, and attendance as a result of their greater involvement in the school.

As at the primary level, some co-ordinators in post-primary schools expressed concern that it was the least disadvantaged parents that became involved in HSCL programmes, while parents from less advantaged homes, who might for example have problems of literacy, were less likely to come forward. Despite efforts of co-ordinators to use home visits or other strategies to reach such parents, this concern would appear to have substance.

When the HSCL programmes had been running in schools for a period of two years, a survey was carried out to obtain more systematic data from mothers themselves that might throw light on the question of involvement and its correlates. Interviews were conducted with mothers of pupils in the six selected primary schools who had been identified by co-ordinators as 'involved' in the HSCL programme, 'not involved but not needing help,' and 'not involved but needing help.'

A number of demographic characteristics were found to distinguish uninvolved mothers described as needing help from the other categories of mother. Such uninvolved mothers were

more likely to come from a one-parent family, to have more children, and where there were two parents in the family, the uninvolved (needing help) were more likely to be unemployed.

The uninvolved group (needing help) also differed from involved parents, and frequently from the uninvolved group that was not considered to need help, in a number of practices and attitudes related to the child's educational environment, at home and at school. Thus, parents in the uninvolved group considered to need help were less likely to have read to their child when younger, less likely to read themselves, less likely to talk to their child about something seen on television or that had been read, and less likely to check the child's television viewing or reading. They also were more likely to perceive that their child was doing less well than other children at school, to feel that they could not help their child with homework, and to expect their child to leave school at a younger age. In general, uninvolved mothers considered not to need help were more like involved mothers than like uninvolved ones considered to be in need of help.

These findings on the characteristics of uninvolved parents lend support to teachers' views that some parents who were considered to be most in need of assistance did not become involved in HSCL programmes. They also indicate the need for increased efforts to advance the level of involvement of such parents.

7. THE IMPACT OF HSCL PROGRAMMES ON PUPILS

Limited information is available on the impact of HSCL programmes on children. It should be acknowledged that effects at the pupil level are likely to be long-term, beyond the life of this evaluation. However, while effects, for example, on student achievement are likely to be long term and while data on one of the aims of the HSCL scheme relating to students' continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level are clearly beyond the time-scale of the evaluation, at the same time one might expect at this stage to be able to detect some processes and behaviours that would suggest by their presence a real probability that longer term goals would be achieved.

A number of effects on pupils were reported by co-ordinators in a majority of schools. For the most part, the effects referred to 'some' pupils (sometimes as few as one or two pupils with whom the co-ordinator or another staff member had intervened directly). Effects included improved behaviour, improved attendance, improved scholastic achievement, greater care in their school work, and more positive attitudes to school and teachers, to themselves, and to their parents. Co-ordinators also reported that pupils had received more practical help with school work. This was particularly evident in schools in which parents assisted in classroom activities or other activities with pupils (e.g., computers, paired reading). Over two-thirds of involved mothers also reported that, as a consequence of their involvement in courses, they had learned how to help their child(ren) with school learning. This was true for a greater percentage of those who had been involved in classrooms.

Teachers noted some of these effects also, pointing in addition to the fact that the presence of parents in classrooms (at junior level in primary school) made children happier. The majority of older pupils (fifth class) who were interviewed during the evaluation did not favour the presence of their own parents in their classroom.

However, their reaction might differ if their parents actually came to help in their classroom. Few teachers saw any immediate effects on pupils' scholastic performance. Most felt that such effects would take longer to emerge.

8. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN HSCL PROGRAMMES

One of the aims of the HSCL scheme is to promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of children. In pursuit of this aim, co-ordinators, on average, devoted about 9% of their time to contacting a variety of agencies and individuals and there was considerable variation between them in the precise agencies or individuals that were contacted. Over the first three years in which the scheme was in operation, a large number of agencies and individuals were contacted.

Initially, contact was mainly to publicize and explain the HSCL scheme, to find out more about agencies and individuals, to establish relationships with them, and to seek resources. As time went on, contacts were established with voluntary agencies (e.g., youth organizations, social services), health and social service agencies/individuals (e.g., public health nurse, social worker), groups involved in parents' education (Vocational Education Committees - VECs), a number of local initiatives (e.g., women's groups), and others.

There was a marked increase from the second to the third year of the scheme in the numbers of schools for which co-ordinators contacted local agencies or individuals. While the greatest percentage of schools for which contact was made with any individual agency or person in the second year was 32 (and this was high for the year), by the following year a greater percentage had contacted three agencies/individuals and close to 30% had contacted four further agencies or individuals. During the first two years, the Vocational Education Committee was the agency contacted by the greatest number of schools. Other agencies/individuals that attracted contact from a relatively high number of schools in both years were public health nurses and social workers. By the third year of the scheme, an increasing number of contacts had been made with community gardaí, child

and family guidance centres, Area Partnership Companies, and city corporations.

Co-ordinators' assessments of the extent to which a variety of community agencies or individuals contributed to the success of HSCL programmes can be interpreted as providing an indication of their perceptions of what the main thrust of programmes should be. Their assessments are of particular interest in the context of the balance that had to be struck between two important sets of goals of the HSCL scheme: goals that emphasize the long-term development of parents and community, and goals that are related to alleviation of the day-to-day problems of families and children.

When we examine co-ordinators' ratings of the extent to which community agencies and individuals contributed to the success of HSCL programmes, we find that the most valued contributions were judged to have come from agencies that one would expect to provide services relating to the long-term development of parents and communities. Thus, the agency most frequently named as having contributed to a great extent to programme success was one that provides parent education courses and resources for programmes (VECs). Also relatively frequently named were agencies that have as their concern the economic and social development of areas (city corporations, Area Partnership Companies).

For programmes in which they were involved, social workers, community gardaí, public health nurses, and child care and family guidance centres were perceived to have contributed to the success of the programmes, but their contribution was much more frequently judged to be 'to some extent' rather than 'to a great extent.'

Differences in the weight assigned to community agencies and individuals by different co-ordinators probably reflects a difference in emphasis between the HSCL programmes of schools. In some schools, greater weight was assigned to the contribution of development agencies while in others greater weight was assigned to individuals and services that could provide immediate support in dealing with problems.

It was envisaged that local committees, made up of representatives from schools, parents/families, and local statutory and voluntary organizations, should play a key role in determining the focus of HSCL programmes and in the development of relationships between schools, homes, and the community. At an early stage in the scheme, the issue of local committees generated much concern among some principals, chairpersons of Boards of Management, and local co-ordinators, a concern that was reflected in the pace at which local committees were established. By the end of the first year of the scheme, 25 primary schools had established a committee, while at the end of the third year 33 had such a committee. Four post-primary schools had established a local committee by the end of their second year in the scheme. This was done in conjunction with local primary schools.

Though slow to develop, by the end of the third year of the scheme, local committees had begun to play an increased role in planning and decision-making in relation to HSCL activities, though this role varied greatly. However, many teachers remained unaware of the existence of local committees, their roles or functions. A number of problems emerged regarding the operation of the committees. These included identification of the role of committees, the role of parents, poor attendance at meetings, and lack of contact between the committees and other agencies. Despite such problems, the concept of a local committee was perceived by school personnel as worthwhile.

Factors identified by co-ordinators as having contributed to the success of a local committee, where one was established, included parent awareness of HSCL programmes, support from the school principal, the degree of co-operation and effort exhibited by committee members, and community awareness of HSCL activities.

9. CONCLUSION

An examination of the operation of HSCL programmes in their first two or three years of operation in primary schools and their first two years in post-primary schools indicates that a considerable amount of activity was generated in schools. Schools provided a wide range of courses for parents (mothers), including self-development courses, parenting courses, classes in the primary-school curriculum, and leisure courses. Homes were visited and opportunities were provided in schools for parents to meet socially. Parents became involved in a variety of school activities, both in the classroom and outside it. Reactions to such activity, among teachers and parents, were very positive. It is a tribute to co-ordinators that changes in school practice and ethos were accomplished without any discernible negative reactions. It seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of such activities and of the reactions of all involved in HSCL liaison programmes — co-ordinators, parents, and teachers — that a major start has been made in meeting one of the aims of the scheme — to promote active co-operation between home and school.

There is also some evidence that movement had occurred towards the achievement of a second aim of the scheme — to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills. This conclusion may be inferred from observations that parents had increased in self-confidence, knew more about what was happening in school, and had learned how to help their children with school work.

Judging the extent to which another aim of the project — to enhance the active participation of children in the learning process, in particular those that might be at risk of failure — was achieved is more problematic, since effects on pupil achievement of a project such as the HSCL scheme would be likely to be long-term rather than short-term. There will be an opportunity at a later stage to compare the scholastic achievements of students in participating

schools with the achievements of comparable students at the inception of the scheme. At this stage, we can only comment on the likelihood that the type of programmes that have been implemented will be found to have impacted on students' scholastic progress.

While programmes were in general comprehensive in nature, their major focus, insofar as one can judge from the activities that were generated, can be described as cognitive-behavioural. Furthermore, most activities were directed towards mothers and, in particular, towards providing them with opportunities for self-development. Opportunities were also provided in classes dealing with the curriculum of primary schools and by having mothers present in classrooms. Classroom presence was designed to increase parents' sensitivity to the importance of their role in the educational process and to develop their skills for interacting with their children in ways that would promote their children's educational development. Fewer schools and mothers, however, were involved in such activities than were involved in self-development activities. It is our feeling that a greater emphasis on such activities would be more likely than parent development courses to impact on children's school learning. Such an emphasis would also be likely to meet the needs of the majority of parents who participated in programmes who gave as their reason for participation 'to be more involved in children's education.' In contrast, only minorities gave as reasons 'to improve my own education' or 'to learn more about a pastime.' However, the value of parent development courses should not be underestimated. Such courses may contribute to the growth of parent empowerment and provide a firm basis for parents to develop a greater involvement in their children's education.

Reference in the aims of the HSCL scheme to meeting the needs of children considered to be most at risk raises several issues, not least of which is that of the needs of schools and teachers regarding pupils whose attendance or progress is poor or who are disruptive. This issue generated much debate throughout the first three years of operation of the scheme. While the preventative

nature of the scheme was continuously impressed upon co-ordinators, who were discouraged from providing what could be termed a 'fire-brigade' service, it was also recognized that on the occasions when crises arose in schools or homes, co-ordinators had an important role to play in resolving the immediate problems of the families in question.

A discussion of the needs of children considered to be most at risk also prompts an examination of the characteristics of 'involved' and 'non-involved' mothers. In our survey of parents, we identified a group of uninvolved parents that were in need of greater support in the task of enhancing the educational environment of their children. The fact that co-ordinators were aware of this need and sought to address it by visiting a greater proportion of uninvolved than involved homes should serve to underline the intractable nature of the problem of involving some parents. While one cannot discount the possibility that further visits or networking of parents will produce a more positive response in the future, neither can one be sure that this will be the case. At this stage, a search for alternative strategies would seem in order. These might involve more intensive work in the home with mothers. One strategy which co-ordinators have developed to address this need is the use of parents as home visitors. Given the present resources available within the HSCL scheme, it would appear that co-ordinators will have to delegate further their responsibilities and develop networks of individuals to support their work if the scheme is to be extended to reach all parents.

The community-based aspect of the HSCL scheme received less emphasis in programmes than cognitive-behavioural aspects. This is not surprising since there is a reference to community in only one of the aims of the HSCL scheme and that is limited to enhancing 'active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children.' In evaluating the effectiveness of the HSCL programmes in achieving the aim regarding community involvement, it is necessary to distinguish two types of community-based programmes. One recognizes that since many

agencies besides the family play a role in supporting child development, partnership with a variety of formal and informal social systems and organizations may be necessary to create optimal conditions for children's development. The other type of programme, recognizing that the problems of disadvantage very often have their origins in the conditions of the communities in which families live, communities that may lack services, organization, and leadership, sees development of the community itself as a prerequisite to sustaining the effects of any intervention that may be implemented to support children's development. Both the aim of the scheme and the way in which programmes have developed suggest that the former type of programme is what was envisaged in the HSCL scheme. If this is so, programmes may be regarded as having met the scheme's aim insofar as many co-ordinators were successful in establishing links with relevant community agencies. The extension and development of local committees should serve to further facilitate this work.

Finally, we may consider the extent to which programmes have been successful in bringing schools to the point that they provide a more appropriate educational environment for children. There is no doubt that the schools in the HSCL scheme have changed. They are more accommodating of parents, are providing a wide range of services for them, and are allowing them to participate more actively in the work of the school and of classrooms. One might expect this trend to continue until all teachers have some involvement in home-school-community programmes. However, this will pose a formidable challenge for schools, particularly at the post-primary level, given the constraints under which they operate in their organization and functioning. A critical element of any change process will, of course, be continued staff development so that teachers and other staff members will be fully informed about and fully involved in bringing about the change.

Even if radical changes in the organization and functioning of schools are not to be expected, it would seem appropriate to explore further how schools, under present constraints, are dealing with problems of disadvantage. There have been several initiatives

at national level designed to deal with disadvantage which have allowed schools to purchase materials, to reduce class size, and to provide remedial and psychological services. However, these initiatives have so far either been evaluated in isolation or not at all. It would seem appropriate at this stage to examine the impact of the variety of measures that have been taken from the point of view of individual schools. Now that HSCL programmes, together with other programmes, are well-established in schools, such an examination should provide useful information for policy decisions on the relative effectiveness of existing measures as well as on the possible need for other approaches to deal with the problems of disadvantage. While it would be unrealistic to expect individual initiatives such as the HSCL scheme to solve the problems of disadvantage, it may not be unrealistic to expect that a combination of approaches would serve to alleviate them. There is already evidence from elsewhere that such a combination would be likely to be more effective than single-focus strategies.

For example, a multi-faceted approach to meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged students is favoured in recent major interventions in the United States. While interventions vary in their emphasis and in detail, major efforts, such as *Success for All Schools* (Slavin, 1989), *Accelerated Schools* (Levin, 1987), and *School Development Program* (Comer, 1988), all share certain characteristics. First, all encourage a highly contextualized curriculum placing great emphasis on reading and language skills. Second, all involve smaller classes to facilitate individual attention and the development of relationships between teachers and pupils. Third, all emphasize the important role that parents must play in their children's educational experiences. Fourth, all approaches include governance structures designed to empower schools to develop a unity of purpose to focus and build on strengths. Finally, all programmes emphasize prevention over remediation. Thus, they operate at the primary level and show a commitment to preschool experiences (see King, 1994).

The HSCL scheme shares some of the features of these approaches but also differs from them in a number of respects. The

most obvious similarity is to be found in the role assigned to parents. For both the HSCL scheme and the American interventions, parents occupy a central role. The Irish approach is probably closest to the *Success for All Schools* in its approach to parental involvement. While it accepts the *Accelerated School* philosophy that there is room for considerable variety in how parents get involved as long as they get involved, it also shares the more structured approach of the *Success for All Schools* in its provision of a local co-ordinator, in its conduct of home visits, in its parenting workshops, in offering strategies for helping children at home, in recruiting parents to volunteer in schools, and in its provision of referrals to social agencies (see Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992). Although not an integral part of the HSCL scheme, reduced pupil-teacher ratios, as a consequence of other interventions for schools in disadvantaged areas, are a feature of the Irish approach as of American approaches. The Irish approach is also similar to the American ones in its promotion of parent involvement in school governance.

However, the approaches differ insofar as in Ireland, the emphasis is on the role of local committees in community involvement, while in the United States the focus is on parents' activities in the context of challenges faced by schools. The areas in which the Irish and American approaches diverge most relate to preschool intervention and curriculum. While preschool intervention has been a feature of earlier attempts to deal with disadvantage in Ireland (Kellaghan, 1977), it is not a feature of the HSCL scheme. Modification of curriculum, a key feature of current and past American interventions, though not an aspect of the HSCL scheme, also featured in earlier Irish efforts (Kellaghan, 1977). At this stage, the integration of preschool and curriculum components with the HSCL scheme would seem an appropriate way of providing a broader and more multi-faceted approach to the problems faced in disadvantaged schools.

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