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# THE SECOND HANDBOOK ON PARENT EDUCATION

*Contemporary Perspectives*

Edited by

MARVIN J. FINE

# The Second Handbook on Parent Education

## Contemporary Perspectives

Edited by  
**Marvin J. Fine**

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## Preface

The statement was recently made that “child care and parent education are the instruments most readily available to increase the nation’s capacity to achieve its human development aspiration and fulfill its human development needs” (Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne, & Weeks, 1984, p. 2). Data on divorce rates, the incidence of children being raised in single-parent, step-parent, and blended families, the number of employed mothers, and the continued economic and social pressures on families all argue for a full range of parent and family education and support programs.

A multifaceted concept of parent education envisions programs and services being offered through the private and public sectors, to parents of varying educational and economic levels, for normal and exceptional children. Furthermore, narrowly defined programs on child care and parenting skills extend quite naturally into the broader picture of healthy family functioning. This progression projects to a parent–family support and education model that is not age related and can apply via a complex of available sources to parents and families at all age levels. The services can be of an educative and preparatory nature as well as in response to crisis.

The forerunner of this book, the *Handbook on Parent Education* (Fine, 1980), examined some popular models of parent education and the application of parent education to diverse populations. The preparation of this book was substantially encouraged by the favorable response to the earlier book. The study of the American family and concern with the development and welfare of children continue as keen interests of both scholars and practitioners. Much is left to learn about families and the parenting of children, and perhaps even more is needed in terms of dissemination of information and educating parents.

Despite the commonly used term “handbook,” it is unrealistic to expect any volume to capture the total state of the art in a given area. This book is considered both as an extension of and as a companion volume to

the *Handbook on Parent Education*. The contributors were selected as persons actively involved in a particular area of parenting education and able to write not only from a scholarly position but from an awareness of issues related to the application and dissemination of knowledge and skills.

The book reveals a broad range of topics, beginning with the chapter in Part I by Fine and Henry on professional issues facing those who conduct formal parent education programs. The chapter on national policy by the Kaplans is a comprehensive, thoughtful exposition on federal philosophy and activities related to family policy. The third chapter, by Stinnett and DeFrain, summarizes the landmark efforts by Stinnett and his associates in investigating the characteristics of healthy families.

The second part of the book considers delivery systems and various focuses of parenting education. Popkin's chapter on "Active Parenting" highlights the utilization of and educational potential of a video-based program. The pioneering efforts in the state of Missouri to implement Burton White's ideas on early parenting experiences are described in the chapter by Vartuli and Winter. The effective and comprehensive parenting programs discussed by Kroth were developed as a collaborative effort between the public schools and a university. A central requirement in the education of exceptional children is the inclusion of parents in an individual educational program conference. The chapter by Simpson and Fiedler addresses the needs of parents in terms of active participation in such conferences as well as issues related to parent involvement in the education of handicapped children.

The figures on teenage pregnancies are frightening in their implications for the futures of the children and mothers in those circumstances. The chapter by Merrill provides an overview of this problem and examines a number of programs related to the needs of pregnant mothers. The last chapter in the part on delivery systems, by Peterson and Cooper, looks into the special needs of parents of young handicapped and developmentally delayed children. This is an underserved population that is just beginning to receive the attention it deserves.

The third part, concerned with training and research, begins with a chapter by Medway on measuring the effectiveness of parent education. The parent satisfaction scale as developed and described by Guidubaldi and Cleminshaw represents a significant contribution to our ability to measure important aspects of family functioning. The chapter by Gamson, Hornstein, and Borden presents a formalized instruction training program. While the program depicts one specific model, Adlerian in nature, this chapter was selected because it describes a comprehensive and extended training program that incorporates high standards.



The fourth and last part of the book deals with trends and directions. It includes a chapter by Van Zandt and Cannon-Nifoussi, focusing on the issues that adult children face with their aging parents. In her chapter, Nye describes a range of parent education and involvement programs and contemporary strategies for school implementation. The last chapter, by Lee and Brage, is a comprehensive examination of several important shifts in the focus on family life education. This chapter helps to further broaden and extend the view of parenting education into the larger and perhaps more meaningful picture of family life education.

In sum, this book should enhance the reader's understanding of the contemporary scene in parenting education, including effective programming, important issues, and future trends.

Marvin J. Fine

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I

# Introduction





## Professional Issues in Parent Education

Marvin J. Fine  
Stephan A. Henry

### Introduction

Although the contemporary interest in parent education suggests its novelty, the concept is hardly new. Croake and Glover (1977) have provided an excellent history of parent education, dating the first serious activities in 1806. During the 1930s thousands of adults participated in parent education groups and several volumes of research on the topic were published (Davis & McGinnis, 1939; Hattendorf et al., 1932; Ojemann et al., 1932).

Two important contributions to the contemporary interest in parenting education are the national, federally subsidized movement to educate preschoolers and their families, Head Start, and the Parent Effectiveness Training Program (PET) (Gordon, 1970). The latter program had not only reached over 250,000 parents by 1976, but had also formally trained 8,000 instructors (Brown, 1976). Behind the scenes, however, were several conditions that prompted national attention to the needs of parents (Clarke-Stewart, 1981): (1) parents were increasingly seen as the most important influence on children's development; (2) schools were not seen as effective in changing children; (3) families were under greater societal stress; (4) there was evidence that many parents were not effective; and (5) new scientific knowledge on childrearing was available.

A recent survey of parents' attitudes and beliefs reported that 75% of the 30,000 respondents believed that it is harder to be a parent today than in the past (Greer, 1986). Certainly recognition of the magnitude of drug use by children and youth, adolescent suicide rates, and the generally

Note: Both writers share equally in authorship of the chapter.