

Confidence

Motivation

Effort

Responsibility

Initiative

Perseverance

Caring

Teamwork

Common Sense

Problem Solving

Focus



**To Ensure A
Lifetime of Achievement**

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Academics + Multiple Intelligences + Character Development =

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MEGASKILLS

Habits, Attitudes and Behaviors
For Doing Well in School and on the Job

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Building Abilities To Achieve In An Era Of Technology And Change

School / Community Leadership Development Training

MegaSkills® Leader Training for Parent Workshops

MegaSkills® Essentials for the Classroom

The New MegaSkills® Bond

The MegaSkills® School Program

Discussion Groups

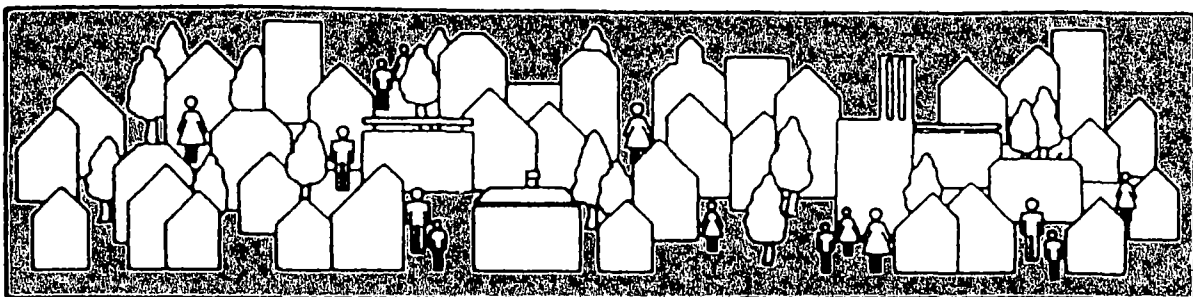
What Do We Say? What Do We Do?®

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The MegaSkills® Education Center of the nonprofit Home and School Institute
Developing educational partnerships among schools, families and the community

My Steps To Success

MEGASKILLS

confidence

motivation

effort

responsibility

initiative

perseverance

caring

teamwork

common sense

problem solving

focus

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A STATISTICAL PORTRAIT OF MEGASKILLS® PROGRAMS

1989-December 1998

MegaSkills is an "expanding universe": This portrait delineates the use of the MegaSkills Program nationally which began with the Parent Workshop Trainings in 1989. MegaSkills programs grow from the 30 year experience of the nonprofit Home and School Institute in the field of school and family/community involvement.

States Represented	48
Schools Implementing the MegaSkills Programs <i>(Count began in 1993)</i>	3,248
Trained to Lead MegaSkills Parent Workshops <i>(1989-December 1998)</i>	8,264
<i>Certified MegaSkills Leaders</i> <i>(Leaders who have successfully completed five or more workshops for parents)</i>	1,727
<i>Number of MegaSkills Workshops Conducted by Certified Leaders</i>	10,588
<i>Parents Participating in MegaSkills Workshop Programs</i>	123,850
Teachers Trained to Teach MegaSkills Essentials in the Classroom <i>(This program began in 1993)</i>	2,710
<i>Number of Children Learning MegaSkills in their Classrooms</i>	66,200

Major Corporations and Businesses Sponsoring and Facilitating MegaSkills Programs for Employees and for the Community **221**

(Note: This group includes Employee Service Initiatives and school/business partnerships, such as Fort Wayne and York Chambers of Commerce, The Sears Roebuck-Foundation, Kraft Foods, Merck, IBM, USAA Insurance Company, Houghton Mifflin, Xerox and TIME for Kids.)

MEGASKILLS® PROGRAM IMPACT

- **The Austin, Texas Independent School District using the MegaSkills Leader Parent Program tracked 1196 students in grades pre K-6. Students whose parents attended MegaSkills Workshops showed: Higher scores on statewide achievement tests, fewer discipline problems, higher attendance rates and higher test scores than the national average.**

Parents indicated that they now feel more able to become involved in their children's education and have better communication with their children. Principals of the involved schools corroborate these findings and strongly support continuing the program.

- **Memphis State University researchers, evaluating the impact on students and families participating in the MegaSkills Workshop Program in Tennessee, found a significant extension of learning time beyond the classroom:**

Homework Time: *Children spending six hours a week on homework doubled, while those spending less than one hour decreased.*

TV Time: *Average time children spend watching TV during the school week decreased 31 minutes per week. Time not spent on TV was spent on homework.*

Parent/Child Time: *Average time parents spent with children each day increased after the workshop to 2.25 hours from 2.02 hours.*

- **In Louisville, KY, the first MegaSkills School under a grant from the US Department of Education Learning Choice Magnet Program, began at Maupin Elementary School. (This data is summarized from the University of Louisville Evaluation, 1994.)**

A MegaSkills School combines four major elements: school environment, parent involvement training, classroom training, and Bond training. All work towards the accomplishment of the MegaSkills School Achievement Ladder which includes reducing discipline incidents and building and sustaining parent involvement in the school and at home to support student achievement.

Maupin school data indicate more than 90% of teachers have integrated the program into their individual class curriculum.

More than 50% of the teachers use the specific MegaSkills curriculum units at least once a week.

More than 75% of teachers using the MegaSkills Essentials found children having more respect for others, working more cooperatively, more able to concentrate and pay attention, having fewer discipline problems and showing greater responsibility in completing assignments.

(Documentation on program impact for HSI/MegaSkills programs must be cited only in reference to HSI programs and is not applicable to other parent involvement programs.)

Recipes for School Success

The KAPPAN - June 1999

BY MARK F. GOLDBERG

Mr. Goldberg talks with a woman who parlayed the paraphernalia of daily home life into a program that enables her to influence parent involvement across the country.

AN ENERGETIC, bright, determined, and plainspoken woman, Dorothy Rich took the obvious and the mundane and transformed them into a well-organized educational enterprise. Everyone in education knows how crucial the family is to a child's educational success, but rarely do educators do more than bemoan the fact that a particular child is ill-prepared to learn. During the 1960s and 1970s, when the continuing calls for school reform began to sweep the profession as a result of books by such people as John Holt, Christopher Jencks, and Jonathan Kozol, it was the rare educator who thought to put together the hundreds of ways in which parents could be of specific help to children in their homes. Almost all the reform and support programs then and since — such as Head Start or programs to train teachers and administrators to do things differently in the school — have concentrated on offering help outside the home.

But Dorothy Rich took a different approach. Using paper cartons, tables, lamps, chairs, electric bills, and other paraphernalia of daily life in a home, Rich began

MARK F. GOLDBERG is an education writer and consultant who lives in East Setauket, N.Y. He recently published *How to Design an Advisory System for a Secondary School* (ASCD, 1998). He can be reached at Mark12738@aol.com.

in the early 1960s to construct "recipes" and to generate modest ideas that would teach parents how to help their children learn what they needed to know to achieve academic success. She began offering workshops to parents, teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and other school professionals. Rich's original purposes were to teach parents the homespun methods they could use to help their children get ready for success in school and to show educators how they could help parents use these methods. It soon became apparent to Rich that selected parents and school personnel could train other groups.

Dorothy Rich's recipes for school success became known to many community and educational organizations in the 1970s, particularly in the Washington, D.C., area where Rich lived. Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, lauds Rich as one of a handful of people who understood early on the important role families could play and who eventually influenced the parent involvement component of the federal Title I program. Rich now works with the U.S. Department of Education on ways in which parents can be part of any improvement or reform program.

The Home and School Institute — incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Washington, D.C., in 1972 with Dorothy Rich as its president — has to date trained more than 100,000 families in 48 states in the art of using egg cartons, empty boxes, the monthly rent or mortgage bills, vacuum cleaners, and cars to help children both at home and in school to get ready to learn. Rich's book *MegaSkills*, first published by Houghton Mifflin in 1988, organizes many of her ideas and specific lessons and is now

in its third edition with more than 350,000 copies sold. The book has been endorsed by Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund; by Robert Chase, president of the National Education Association; by Tipper Gore; and by former senator and now Presidential candidate Bill Bradley. This is heady stuff for a woman raised in a modest home in Michigan where "chickens roamed in the backyard."

Dorothy Rich grew up as the child of immigrant parents in the 1930s and early 1940s in Monroe, Michigan. "Mine is the first generation in my family to go to college," she relates. In fact, her parents were never comfortable with English and spoke Yiddish at home. But they did emphasize the extreme importance of education to Dorothy and her brother, both of whom eventually earned doctorates, and they did everything they could to encourage their children to do well in the "solid, excellent, supportive schools in Monroe, where teachers really cared about you and taught with purpose."

When Dorothy was 13, her mother died after a two-year illness, and the family moved to Detroit. Her older brother went to college, and Dorothy found herself an outsider in the city high school, "which was too big and where it was difficult for a teenager to break in socially if you didn't know people from the earlier years." In spite of that, Dorothy did well in her schoolwork, went to the University of Michigan for two years, and completed her undergraduate work at Wayne State University. By 1964 she had earned a master's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University; had taught in two schools in different states; had married and moved to Washington, D.C.; and was the at-home mother of



Dorothy Rich

two small children. As a result of what she had learned in the previous few years at Teachers College and as a high school teacher in Virginia, she began conducting workshops for teachers and parents in the evening division of the University of Virginia.

When Rich taught high school in Virginia in the late 1950s and asked her colleagues in several grades why so many youngsters did not seem prepared to learn, she got a standard answer. "My high school colleagues said the junior high teachers didn't do the job; the junior high teachers blamed the elementary teachers, who in turn blamed the family. So I began to ask, What do we want the family to do?" Motherhood gave her considerable insight into just how rapidly and how much children could learn at home. In the professional literature, she was influenced by the work of Benjamin Bloom, who had "started to measure what children learn before they come to school. Bloom was interested in the role of the family — something that was never mentioned in any teacher-training work." Rich soon became convinced that there were skills that children needed to learn outside of school if they were going to do well in school subjects.

In 1964 Rich began a Sunday column in the *Washington Post* called "Home and School." Each week, she wrote about specific ways in which families could help children prepare for school. "This was before the time of self-help books and included recipes for promoting learning in English, social studies, mathematics, and other school subjects." The recipes began to pile up, Rich began to have a serious readership, and she was now conducting more fully developed workshops for parents called "Success for Children Begins at Home."

By 1972, when Rich established the Home and School Institute, she had hundreds of recipes for learning that began to form around such concepts as confidence and responsibility — concepts that would eventually become what Rich calls MegaSkills. The University of Virginia's Northern Virginia Center, Trinity College, and Catholic University began to support Rich's work. In addition, "I had a considerable following from the *Washington Post* column, and school districts would often give me a room where I could do training. Sometimes the schools paid for this, and sometimes parents paid."

In 1980 the U.S. Department of Edu-

cation asked Rich to develop a program for special education. She "took rooms in two schools in Washington and turned them into a replica of a home. Throughout this home I attached special education home-learning recipes to walls, furniture, and lamps. The children would come in with their parents, and we would demonstrate how this works. It was called The Family Place, and I trained teachers and paraprofessionals to do the training." Rich's program kept expanding into areas such as bilingual training or training that concentrated on the specific needs of the American Postal Workers' Union or the American Red Cross or Parents Without Partners.

By 1987 Rich was able to "pull together my work from many previous years and programs" and develop it into an organized program with application to all groups interested in education — but there was no book to illustrate her accomplishment.

Rich had received support from the Mott Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. She had also taken the program around the country and had prepared several of the best participants in her program to become trainers. In addition, Rich had received her doctorate from Catholic University, where her work focused on the relationship between home learning and school achievement. Her doctoral work, of course, got her to think more seriously about organizing her lessons, recipes, and training programs more carefully and coherently. Just at that point, Don Cameron of the National Education Association, where Rich rented office space, saw the piles of booklets and pamphlets and materials all over her office and told her, "You're the Dr. Spock of education, Dorothy, but not enough people know about you. You've got to pull all this together in a book." Cameron's persistent encouragement was the impetus for Rich to write *MegaSkills*.

"The MegaSkills are the values, the attitudes, and the behaviors that determine success in school and on the job," she states. Over a period of years, the skills that emerged were Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving, and Focus. And it was around these 11 MegaSkills that Rich organized her book. There are dozens of recipes to go with each skill, and new recipes are developed each year. "If I'm going to teach a youngster responsibility, for instance, one recipe is called 'My Special

Place.' The special place is a simple box at the front door. This is where the child, assisted by a parent if necessary, places everything he or she will need for school in the morning." The telephone is an excellent tool for teaching Confidence. "With a very young child, we do activities that help the child to get confident about dialing numbers, dialing grandma, reading left to right. With an older child, we use the telephone to get information. When does the movie start, or when does the library close?"

MegaSkills is not designed to substitute for the work of school, although the program does link recipes to academic objectives. Looking at a mortgage statement or an insurance policy with a youngster is linked to mathematics and reading. Pointing out natural objects while walking down an ordinary street with a child links to science. Nothing in the MegaSkills program is extremely complex or demanding. That sort of work is left for school. This is basic preparation for success, and Rich is the first to acknowledge that her program is "not rocket science." What is rocket science about her program, however, is its organization into 11 categories, the hundreds and hundreds of elegantly simple and well-conceived recipes to support the categories, and the many applications for the MegaSkills. No parent or teacher or group of parents and teachers could easily put together what more than 30 years of careful thought, accumulation of successful lessons, and field-testing have created.

MegaSkills is a brand name for the recipes it represents. But it is also a proven and serious training program. "If you're going to call it MegaSkills, you must use the MegaSkills training activities, and you don't just put in positive parenting or some other material that may be respectable but is not part of this program. This is not a management program of children; it is not a discipline program; it's a program designed to build academics and character development in young people — basically the habits and attitudes and behaviors you need for learning and ultimately for job success." The focus is on using the home to supplement what the school does, not to supplant it. The parents or the professionals who are going to train the parents go through a fully configured workshop that includes warm-up activities, demonstrations, lectures, and small-group activities. There is considerable room for creativity on the part of the workshop leader

in how things are presented, but the broad outline and most of the activities are provided.

All the publicity for MegaSkills is by word of mouth. From Saipan to Alaska, from New York to Nebraska, MegaSkills workshops are held because some community group or school has requested a session. Usually there are 24 people taking part in a one- or two-day workshop, although longer workshops can be provided. The cost of the workshops includes

all of the books and materials that are needed for the session as well as any follow-up meetings. There are eight qualified trainers and 1,500 certified workshop leaders who have taught MegaSkills workshops in four countries and 48 states. These are all experienced people who have come through the ranks of the organization. The leaders work with Rich, are highly qualified, and do all the original training of a group. The trainers are some of the best people who have gone through workshops

and in turn train people in their local areas. In fact, MegaSkills training stresses the obligation to share what you have learned with others. Altogether, these leaders have appeared in 3,000 schools in the U.S.

Dorothy Rich's work has been recognized and honored in many ways. She has received citations for the excellence and usefulness of her work from the National Governors' Association and the U.S. Department of Education. In 1992 the MegaSkills program received the A+ for Breaking the Mold Award from the U.S. Department of Education after several school districts reported good results. In Memphis, for example, researchers from Memphis State University reported that MegaSkills students were watching less TV than other students. Research specialists from the schools in Austin reported that students exposed to MegaSkills got better scores on national and state achievement tests and had fewer discipline problems in school than other students.

None of this completely satisfies Dorothy Rich. She wants entire schools to be organized around MegaSkills. Indeed, she even has a visionary plan for a MegaSkills city. Rich is certain that youngsters today are less prepared to learn than they were 25 years ago. "MegaSkills can give students a structured program to move through the mess and endless complexity of learning. Just because a teacher says something to a student doesn't mean the student has absorbed or learned it." Students need the basic supporting structures to be able to focus on learning: the 11 skills that enable all important learning in school and in work. Rich is equally convinced that many adults are also lacking in MegaSkills and can't be proper role models for young people. In her characteristically energetic and creative way, Dorothy Rich continually thinks of new audiences, new recipes, new training ideas, and new ways to get people to pay attention to the MegaSkills program. She has decided that, instead of putting "children first, I now believe it's parents and teachers first. We have to teach them MegaSkills, so they can be proper role models, and so they can teach those skills to children."

Those who would like to learn more about the MegaSkills program should write to Dorothy Rich at the following address: Dorothy Rich, President, Home and School Institute, MegaSkills Center, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20005; ph. 202/466-3633.

The Dorothy Rich 'Learning Leaders' Awards Program

THE Dorothy Rich Awards will consist of \$500 cash grants from the Home and School Institute, which will be made to 10 individuals to support educators' practical visions for a stronger educational future for children.

- *Themes for the awards program.* The awards focus on educators and parents who are helping one another to help children develop and maintain their love of learning — putting across the educational values that really matter. The awards will focus on the work of educators in problem solving for at-risk children and on the educational role of the family.

- *Eligibility requirements.* To be eligible, teachers and administrators must be currently working in compensatory education with a record of demonstrated experience in family/school efforts. Membership is required in one of the following national organizations that have a record of cooperation with the Home and School Institute: Council of the Great City Schools, National Education Association, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Federal Education Program Administrators, and Phi Delta Kappa.

- *Nomination procedures.* Teachers, principals, and other administrators may submit nominations of individuals they know; self-nomination is acceptable, as well. A brief nomination form is available from the Home and School Institute. It is to be accompanied by two brief recommendations from children, parents, or colleagues.

- *Entry submissions.* Lively and informative presentations are encouraged and can be submitted in a variety of formats — written, audio, graphic — along with an end product addressing these four items: 1) a key problem related to parent involvement and children's school achievement; 2) actions taken to solve the problem and the impact of those actions; 3) a statement of vision for a stronger learning community for children, along with a description of the nominee's efforts to build such a community; and 4) how the nominee plans to use the award to further the vision.

- *Criteria.* Are the messages worth hearing? Worth sharing? What can others learn from them? Do the changes and ideas make a needed contribution to the field? Do they display a sense of innovation and a creative approach to problem solving and to improving the educational process, especially for children in need?

- *Entry deadline.* The deadline for completed entries is 30 June 1999. Winners will be announced through the participating national organizations, their newsletters, and webpages; through press releases to media and school districts; and on the Home and School Institute website.

For more information and the brief nomination form, contact: MegaSkills Center, Home and School Institute, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20005; ph. 202/466-3633; fax 202/833-1400; e-mail: HSIDRA@erols.com; website: www.MegaSkillsHSI.org.



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Andrew Hartman
Even Start/Literacy Programs

Phillip Harris
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David Imig
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Charles Young School
DC Public Schools

James Van Erden
Director, Workforce Development
Goodwill Industries International

Joan Worden
President
WNS Group

Edward Zigler
Sterling Professor of Psychology
Yale University

Harriett Stunchill
Director
MegaSkills Education Center

**WHAT MEGASKILLS AND THE HOME AND
SCHOOL INSTITUTE ARE ALL ABOUT ...
AND CAN DO FOR YOU ...**

Comprehensive Reform for True Learning

The nonprofit Home and School Institute designs and provides training and materials to build successful learning and achievement for children and adults in school and beyond. After years of testing, these are now available to teachers, parents, employers and the wider community.

The unique and special focus of the Institute, founded by Dr. Dorothy Rich, is **MegaSkills**. These are the habits, the behaviors, and attitudes vital for achievement. They are the inner engines of learning.

This Institute offers award-winning MegaSkills training programs and publications nationally and internationally. Evidence from these programs in over 3,000 schools ... indicates higher test scores, increased self-discipline for students and improved abilities of teachers and parents to become involved and successful.

With thirty years of research and experience, the Institute delivers education for the information age. MegaSkills focus on the needs of adults and children as learners in school, in the workplace, in life.

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. SCHUMER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide grants for mentor teacher programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "21st Century Mentor
5 Teacher Act".

6 **SEC. 2. MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAMS.**

7 Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education
8 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6601 et seq.) is amended—

9 (1) by redesignating part E as part G; and

DISCUSSION DRAFT

S.L.C.

9

1 velopment and training to local educational
2 agencies; and

3 “(B) have established partnerships or pro-
4 pose to establish partnerships with private busi-
5 ness entities or public or private nonprofit enti-
6 ties to carry out the activities described in sub-
7 section (d).

8 “(3) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under
9 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give priority to el-
10 igible entities that are in a partnership or propose
11 to be in partnership with a private business entity
12 or public or private nonprofit entity that is nation-
13 ally recognized for a record of providing effective
14 training, programs, and materials to promote family
15 and community involvement in education, such as
16 the Home and School Institute, Inc.

17 “(4) GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.—To the
18 maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall
19 award grants under paragraph (1) so that such
20 grants are equitably distributed geographically
21 throughout the United States.

22 “(b) DURATION.—A grant awarded under subsection
23 (a) shall be awarded for a period of 5 years.

24 “(c) AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant awarded
25 under subsection (a) shall be determined based on—



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Harriet Stonehill
Director
MegaSkills Education Center

October 1999

Requested Response On Education Summit Paper
Where Are The Parents?

I applaud the positive tenor of this most recent Education Summit. Yet, because I work with academic and character programs in over 3000 schools nationally. I am concerned and surprised about the lack of attention in the summit paper to the educational role and responsibilities of the family.

This is the basic human connection in education. Governor Gray Davis in his remarks called parents the first teachers. Yes and not only are they first ...they are also the continuing and reinforcing teachers.

The reality is this. We can change the books, put in more teachers, fix buildings. But kids won't learn (what we want them to learn) unless they have the will to learn. This reality derives in great part from children's out of school experience, especially in the home.

My message, drawn from over 30 years in the field, as a "pioneer" in family and community engagement in education is this: we have to find new and more ways to connect kids with adults and adults with adults. I call these "Relationships for Learning." Columbine and more places than we want to remember are continuing reminders of this critical need.

At the same time, we have to develop students' capacities for ongoing learning and not just for this year's test...but for all the days and tests to come. I call these "MegaSkills" but by whatever name, they are essential for real learning. We can build these abilities. That is why I urge the Education Summit to put the vital elements of family responsibilities and students' own desire to learn into their recommendations for improved schooling.

Dorothy Rich, Ed. D.
Founder/President
Home and School Institute
Author of *MegaSkills®: Building
Children's Achievement for the
Information Age*

Building the "Inner Engines of Learning" for Success in School and Beyond

The Home and School Institute, Inc. is a nonprofit, Section 501(c)(3) organization.

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*Executive Director,
Strategic Planning (Ret.)*
Merck & Co., Inc.
- James Van Erden
Senior Vice-President
National Alliance of Business
- Juan Worden
President
WNS Group
- Edward Zigler
Sterling Professor of Psychology
Yale University
-
- Harriett Stonehill
Director
MegaSkills Education Center

1999

Students, Parents, Teachers Agree: MegaSkills uniquely build the achievement and the character that students need for success in the information age-- using instructional strategies for diverse, individual needs.

One principal tells another: "MegaSkills Works!"

Dear Colleague:

We are delighted to learn that you are interested in the MegaSkills® Training Programs. Program documentation indicates increased parental involvement, student attendance and test scores and decreased student discipline problems.

MegaSkills Programs are now being used with success by over 3000 schools in 48 states. Compensatory Education Funds support these training materials and programs.

MegaSkills Leader Training: trains educators and community leaders to conduct parent workshops to enable parents to become active educators of their children in ways that provide increased academic achievement but do not duplicate the work done by schools.

MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom: trains teachers how to help students develop the behaviors and attitudes needed to succeed in school and beyond. The program provides a specific curriculum and integrates into the regular work of the classroom.

New MegaSkills Bond: translates new legislative mandates and national educational goals into practical action for educators and parent leaders. The program focuses on building communications, writing compacts, coordinating resources, and sharing strategies for Goals 2000.

In an effort to meet school district needs, these programs are each conducted in a one or two day session. Trainings may be conducted on consecutive days.

Check our web page (www.MegaSkillsHSI.org). Call or E-mail for more details. We look forward to working with you.

Harriett Stonehill
Harriett Stonehill
Director, MegaSkills Education Center

Building the "Inner Engines of Learning" for Success in School and Beyond

The Home and School Institute, Inc. is a nonprofit, Section 501(c)(3) organization.

e-mail: HSIDRA@erols.com

The Home and School Institute MegaSkills Program

IN BRIEF The Home and School Institute MegaSkills Program	
Developer	Dorothy Rich, HSI
Year Established	1972
# of Schools Served through (1998)	3,405
Level	All Grades
Primary Goal	To build high standards, habits, behaviors and attitudes that determine achievement in school and beyond
Main Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher training •Classroom and parent program •Specially designed curricula •Synergy between school and home •Linkage to work world •Multi-languages •Educational values to build achievement
Results	Improvement in student achievement and competencies based on evidence drawn from field studies by school districts, universities, and feedback from all trainings. (See Implementation and Achievement Sections attached)
Impact on Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •integration of MegaSkills into school subjects •Students more self-disciplined •Increase in teacher abilities to reach diverse students •Student referrals decreased •Provides a common language for all participants
Impact on Organization/Staffing	Heightened teacher morale and ability to work in teams with students and with families
Impact on Schedule	No changes needed to accommodate the classroom program which fits into the regular school day. Parent workshops are conducted at times convenient for on-site educators and parents
Subject-Area Programs Provided by Developer	Yes. Classroom program provides integration activities for reading, math, science, social studies and health. Academic objectives are indicated for all MegaSkills
Students Served	
<i>Title I</i>	Yes
<i>English-language Learners</i>	Yes
<i>Urban</i>	Yes
<i>Rural</i>	Yes
Parent Involvement	MegaSkills is a basic parent involvement model focusing on educational role of the family with specific curricula for home...using home and community resources, nonduplicative of the school yet reinforcing the academic objectives of the school
Technology	No special technology needed in the classroom. Institute's web site services MegaSkills participants with ongoing technical assistance
Materials	All curricula and related materials needed to conduct the program (multi-language) provided to all participants as part of the trainings

Origin/Scope

The Home and School Institute is an independent, nonprofit, non-partisan organization founded in 1972 by author/educator Dorothy Rich. The Institute's original school, community teacher training programs were first implemented at Trinity College and Catholic University starting in 1972. In 1988, the MegaSkills Training programs were begun. Through the end of 1998, they are being used in more than 3000 schools in 48 states.

General Description

The Home and School Institute's MegaSkills is an approach to education that is based on the work of Dorothy Rich and described in the three editions of her book, MegaSkills (1988, 1992, 1998). The focus of the approach is on key personal competencies that the author calls "MegaSkills®". These are the habits, the behaviors, and the attitudes vital to success in school and life. Children need adults, teachers and parents, who can teach these MegaSkills and "connect" with the ways schooling is organized. **This is a two part process: 1) Building Competencies for Learning. 2) Building Relationships for Learning.**

The developer's work, which has evolved from thirty years of research and experience, focuses on meeting the needs of learners -- the adults and children involved - rather than on changing the administrative structure of schools. The changes sought are personal changes (the MegaSkills). These in turn create

the learning relationships that build and sustain educational achievement. MegaSkills determine achievement. They include Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving and Focus. The Institute's programs provide a unique and proven approach to teaching these skills.

* **MegaSkills Leader Training Seminars** train leaders to conduct workshops for families to help children develop MegaSkills.

* **MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom** provides training for teachers to teach MegaSkills directly to children in the classroom.

* **MegaSkills Schools** combine all of the trainings in an achievement process for school wide programs.

The MegaSkills training programs (one and two day seminars with practicum that follows) have been identified as unique because they address simultaneously the social, and academic development of children. All trainings on-site include MegaSkills modules, complete directions and strategies for conducting and managing the program, and on-going technical assistance. A major feature of all MegaSkills Programs is that participants receive a complete program to use immediately.

The training programs are designed to have ever widening impact: each participant trained presents workshops for parents and/or programs in the classroom for students. It is estimated conservatively, based on feedback surveys from sites using MegaSkills, that over 100,000 parents have participated in MegaSkills Parent Workshops, making this program the largest in the nation focusing on the educational role of the family.

Results (See Student Academic Achievement: Other Data)

Parent Involvement Program

Schools using the MegaSkills Parent Workshop Program consistently report that students benefit from having their parents become more involved in their education.

Memphis State University (1990) research found: •**Homework Time:** Children spending six hours a week on homework doubled, while those spending less than one hour decreased. •**TV Time:** Average time children spent watching TV during the school week decreased. Time not spent TV was spent on homework. •**Parent/Child Time:** Average time parents spent with children each day increased.

The Austin, Texas Independent School District (1991-1992) found that PreK-6 students whose parents attended MegaSkills Workshops showed: Higher scores on statewide achievement tests; fewer discipline problems; higher attendance rates.

A large scale study of the implementation and impact of the MegaSkills parent involvement program in 25 schools in Broward County, FL and 14 schools in San Diego, CA is underway. This study will analyze achievement data of students whose parents substantially participated in the parent workshop program.

Classroom Program

A study conducted in 1996 at the **University of Louisville** on the impact of the program on students at the Maupin Elementary School, an inner city school in Louisville serving predominantly African-American students, found that high percentages of teachers identified student behavior and attitude gains, including more responsibility in doing school work, fewer discipline problems and more able to work cooperatively, after the program had been in effect for two years.

Similar results have been obtained at the **A.N. Rice school in Weslaco, Texas**, and the **Emerson-Bandini School in San Diego, California (1996-ongoing)**, where the program has been in effect for one and two years respectively. Both these schools serve predominantly Hispanic-American students, including many with limited English proficiency.

Test Scores on the Texas Assessment Skills (TAAS) increased considerably at the Rico School in grades 3 and 4 after the program had been in operation in only year (1998). Dramatic gains were made at the third grade level, which the school staff had chosen for special program emphasis. The number of children passing the reading test in 1997-98 rose to 91% from 69% in 1996-97. The number passing the math test rose to 95% in 1997-98 from 75% in 1996--97.

Implementation Assistance

- **Project Capacity:** The Institute, as its programs have evolved, has identified a network of field associates. Each year the Institute staff and its consultants conduct 40-50 trainings under contract from individual school districts across the states. Each summer MegaSkills Programs are conducted at the Gabbard Institute of Phi Delta Kappa. In 1998 to date, 864 educators have participated in 47 trainings. They represent 500 plus schools. The Institute has a track record for service that extends over two decades.
- **Faculty Buy In:** This is encouraged but not required. MegaSkills works extensively with Title I parents/teachers. With the growing number of site councils, many come together to approve of the program before it is launched and to support it as it continues.
- **Initial Training:** Sites select participants for the training. Topics include presentations on MegaSkills, demonstrations of classroom and workshop sessions, instruction in the teaching and management of the program, evaluation, connections with the family, and problem solving strategies. Participants work in small study sections. Action plans are developed. Only persons receiving this training conduct this program.
- **Follow-Up Coaching:** MegaSkills provides a Leader Certification Process for parent workshop leaders, surveys and evaluation materials for classroom teachers for continuing involvement with HSI and for use in requesting technical assistance and problem solving. HSI also offers a "recalibration" program.
- **Networking:** MegaSkills supports an 800 line, E-mail support and an informational web site with a new private service for MegaSkills Network trainees.
- **Implementation Review:** MegaSkills staff contact all sites by phone, by E-mail and with surveys twice each year. Successes are shared and problems are addressed. The MegaSkills' office is known for its follow up efforts.

Costs

Individual site trainings are conducted for a minimum of 24 participants at \$315 per person, plus travel costs for HSI trainer. All participants receive full curricula and all materials needed to conduct and maintain the program

Fees include continuing assistance from HSI, certification for leaders conducting the parent program, surveys, evaluations, and learning materials for each participant to distribute to all families and students.

A new trainer of trainer model is being developed and tested for large city systems. This involves a three year commitment and provides costs savings for large numbers of teachers to be trained. It develops an internal capacity for large districts to continue and expand the program. Call HSI for details.

Student Populations

MegaSkills Programs have been successfully conducted for diverse populations in diverse sites...urban to rural in 48 states and all the way to the Northern Marianas Islands. Groups include African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific American, newly arriving immigrant families, and at-risk families. Materials are available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao and Creole. Materials are culturally sensitive. Home-Learning-Activities for families to use with their children, are provided across the grades from pre-K to secondary school.

Special Considerations

The importance of this program for educational reform... Many of our children are not acquiring the understandings they need about what it takes to succeed and the hope they need for themselves. The MegaSkills program builds these understandings, the true basics that sustain us even as the world around us changes. Today, more than ever, these need to be taught.

MegaSkills have been called the "inner engines of learning." They are the qualities, skills and attitudes needed for success in school and beyond. The MegaSkills are based on the study of report cards, personnel records, and interviews with educators and employers. These are lifelong attributes taught and reinforced through this program in the classroom and at home.

Selected Evaluations

Developer

Rich, Dorothy. (In press 1999). Strengthening Children's Abilities to Achieve by Building Relationships for Learning. Positive Outcomes for Children's Learning, edited by Arthur Reynolds and Herbert J. Walberg., Washington, DC. Child Welfare League Press

Van Dien, James and Eakin, Sybil. (1997). Findings from the Field, The Emerson-Bandini School. Mott Foundation Study, Washington, DC. The Home and School Institute

Outside Researchers

Correa, Velda. (1998). Evaluating the Impact of the MegaSkills Program. Audiotape Report. Weslaco, TX.

Edge, Denzil. (1996). Maupin MegaSkills School-Wide Final Evaluation. University of Louisville. Louisville, KY

Memphis State University. (1990). Learning is HomeGrown. Final Evaluation, Memphis, TN.

Office of Research and Evaluation. (1991-92). Austin Independent School District. Austin, Texas.

Texas Education Agency. (1998). Third Grade Reading and Math Scores.

Sample Sites

MegaSkills sites are located in 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Saipan. Among the sites that offer special dimensions of the program:

Maupin Elementary School
The First "MegaSkills School"

1309 Catalpa St.
Louisville, KY 40211
502-485-8310

Attn: Jan Deeb, Director Family
Resource Center
Robin Dix, Principal

Comer/MegaSkills Program
Integrating Comer Process and the
MegaSkills Program

San Diego Schools
4100 Normal St., Room 2008
San Diego, CA 92103
619-293-8647

Attn: Bea Fernandez,
Comer Resource Teacher

Broward County
302 Teachers trained throughout
the County

Broward Co. School System
701 NW 31 Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33311
954-797-4654

Attn: Vera Ginn, Director, Title I
Cynthia Williams, Parent Involvement
Coordinator

For more information, contact:

The Home and School Institute
1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 1-800-634-2872
Fax: 202-833-1400
Email: HSIDRA@erols.com
Web Site: www.MegaSkillsHSI.org



Bold print indicates
two or more trainings
in the same city

On-Site MegaSkills® Trainings

1989 - December 1998

MegaSkills Trainings are truly nationwide, from California to Vermont, from Florida to Alaska, from Texas to Michigan. Over 10,000 registrants have completed MegaSkills training programs now being conducted in 48 states. In 1998 alone, 1,044 registrants received training in the MegaSkills Parent Involvement and MegaSkills Essentials Programs.

8,264 MegaSkills Leaders are conducting parent workshops reaching over 120,000 families from diverse cultural, economic and social backgrounds. 3,248 teachers have been trained in Classroom Essentials reaching over 66,000 children and their parents. The Bond program, starting in 1995, has trained 1,158 participants to work in school teams. The numbers grow daily.

Alabama

Birmingham, **Mobile**, Montgomery

Alaska

Anchorage, Atka, Ambler, Buckland, Homer, Kenai, **Kotzebue**, Noatak, Noorvik, Soldotna

Arizona

Flagstaff, Phoenix

Arkansas

Hot Springs

California

Adelanto, Apple Valley, Bakersfield, **Baldwin Park**, Banning, Brawley, Buena Park, **Carson**, Compton, Concord, **Elk Grove**, Escondido, Glendale, Hacienda Heights, Hesperia, Joshua Tree, La Puente, Long Beach, **Los Angeles**, Lynwood, Moreno Valley, **Oakland**, Paradise, Red Bluff, Redlands, Richmond, **Riverside**, **Sacramento**, Salinas, San Bernardino, **San Diego**, Visalia

Colorado

Denver, Vail

Connecticut

Manchester, **Milford**, Norwalk

Delaware

Dover

District of Columbia

Washington

Florida

Daytona Beach, **Fort Lauderdale**, Gainesville, **Jacksonville**, Miami, **Orlando**, Pensacola, Safety Harbor, Viera, **West Palm Beach**

Georgia

Atlanta, Forsythe, Lawrenceville, Marietta

Idaho

Boise

Illinois

Bloomington, **Chicago**, Decatur, Elgin, East Peoria, Evanston, Grayslake, Naperville, Rantoul, Rockford

Indiana

Bloomington, Centerville, Evansville, **Fort Wayne**, **Indianapolis**, Logansport, Michigan City, New Albany, North Vernon, **Richmond**, Spencer, West Terre Haute

Kansas

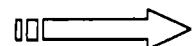
Liberal

Kentucky

Liberty, **Louisville**, Richmond

Maryland

Baltimore



Massachusetts

Arlington, **Boston**, Holyoke, Marlborough, Springfield

Michigan

Caro, Clare, **Detroit**, Flint, Holland, Mason, Pontiac, **Saginaw**, Shelby Township, Taylor, Ypsilanti

Minnesota

Prior Lake, White Bear Lake

Mississippi

Biloxi, Columbus, Gulfport, **Jackson**, **Vicksburg**

Missouri

St. Louis

Montana

Billings, **Helena**

Nevada

Ely, Las Vegas, Lovelock

New Jersey

Englewood, Hackensack, **Newark**, North Brunswick, Parsippany, Passaic, Paterson, White House Station

New York

Bay Shore, **Brooklyn**, **Forest Hills**, **New Rochelle**, Olean, Patchogue, Peru, Rochester

North Carolina

Burlington, Cary, Greenville, **Lumberton**, Raleigh, Washington, Wilson, Winston-Salem

North Dakota

Bismarck, Minot, West Fargo

Oklahoma

Tulsa

Ohio

Barberton, Berlin, **Brecksville**, **Cleveland**, **Columbus**, **Dayton**, East Cleveland, Eaton, Lebanon, **Middletown**, **Parma**, Perrysburg, West Alexandria, Wilmington, **Zanesville**

Oregon

Portland

Pennsylvania

Beaver Valley, Gettysburg, Smethport, York

South Carolina

Bennettsville, **Columbia**, Dillon, Moncks Corner, Newberry

Tennessee

Memphis, **Nashville**

Texas

Amarillo, **Austin**, Corpus Christi, **Fort Worth**, **Houston**, Huntsville, Lampasas, **San Antonio**, South Padre Island, Sugar Land, **Weslaco**

Vermont

Middleburg, Richford

Virginia

Alexandria, Charles City, Bristol, Buena Vista, **Manassas**, Norfolk, **Richmond**, **Stafford**

West Virginia

Beckley, Brooke County, Clarksburg, **Fairmont**, Fayetteville, **Keyser**, **Lewisburg**, Marion City Mineral, Point Pleasant, Weirton

Wisconsin

Eau Claire, Green Bay, Milwaukee, Oshkosh, Spooner

Wyoming

Casper, Thermopolis

Saipan

'MegaSkills'

maximize school learning

JANUARY 19, 1998

By Tamara Henry
USA TODAY

As a parent of four, Dorothy Rich had heard it all: "The class is boring." "The teacher doesn't like me." "The other kids made fun of me." "I hate school." "I've just got to have that brand."

Rather than throw her hands up in despair or take flight, as many parents are tempted to do, Rich established the Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C., 25 years ago to

Education

look for answers and develop ways for parents to help their children through the natural stresses and frustrations of school life.

Rich first began to see a need for such a program during the mid-1950s as a high school English teacher in Arlington, Va. Staff members constantly asked: "Why are these kids having trouble learning?" Even at home, when her children were too young for school, Rich says she was bombarded by their questions about learning and knowledge.

"This was long before Head Starts and preschools," she says. "It was still in that dark ages period when we really did believe children started learning when they entered the school door.

"A very radical idea started whispering in my head, saying: 'Children learn a lot outside of school. A home, every home, is a very important learning place, and parents can do a lot to help every child learn and do well in school.'"

To Rich, the three R's of respect, reassurance and recognition are essential complements to reading, writing and arithmetic. Rich has spent decades teaching parents how to instill into their children 10 "MegaSkills" — a word she coined in 1987 while talking with a group of educators about the attitudes, behaviors and habits that are vital for successful learning.

The MegaSkills are: confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense and problem solving. In a book released this month, *MegaSkills: Building Chil-*



By James Kegley for USA TODAY

Foundations for learning: Former high school teacher Dorothy Rich, left, introduces Angela Harper and grandson Christopher to her 'MegaSkills.' 'Parents can do a lot to help every child learn and do well in school,' Rich says.

Exercises in achievement

Here are a few exercises suggested by Dorothy Rich in her new book, *MegaSkills: Building Children's Achievement for the Information Age*:

► What Do I Do Right? ages 10-12

Many of us spend a lot of time telling each other what we do wrong. This activity helps us focus on what we're doing right. You need paper and pencil.

Together think of and write down at least two things you like about yourselves. *Example:* "I have a good sense of humor. I like to share with others." Talk about what others say they like about you.

Figure out together jobs and activities at home that both you and your child will feel proud of accomplishing. *Examples:* Fixing something around the house, cooking a special dish, teaching the family a new game.

Find some listening time in your daily routine. Even a car ride to the market can be a good time for a chat. Try to set a time, if only for a few minutes, to talk about the day's events.

There are times when children need to share a secret or to ask a question that is bothering them. If you're avail-

able to listen to your children when they are young, chances are they'll continue to communicate with you as they grow older.

► Homework System, ages 10-12

There is a better way than nagging children every day about homework. This activity enables children to keep track on their own of what has to be done. You need paper and a marker.

Use a sturdy, large piece of paper to make a homework chart to post on the wall. Each day after school, your child makes checks to represent homework assignments. To show completed homework, they circle the checks. Attach a marker or pen to the chart so that it is always handy.

Talk about assignments with your child after they're completed. This is more of a conversation than a check-up. Was the assignment difficult? Easy? Would your child like to know more? Consider follow-up trips to a museum or library. Homework can be a starting point for your child's continuing interests — pursued with pleasure and without assignments.





dren's Achievement for the Information Age (\$14, Houghton Mifflin Co.), she adds "focus" to the list and explains how MegaSkills combine academics and character development.

Rich, short and grandmotherly with a quick wit, stresses that MegaSkills have always worked in virtually every aspect of a child's life. But "I haven't been hitting people sufficiently over the head with the fact that this is important academic stuff," she says. "So I decided, 'No more fooling around. We're going to hit them over the head.'"

Rich formulated the list of MegaSkills by looking at school report cards and job evaluation forms. Some people mistakenly believe MegaSkills are innate, she says. Her husband, Spencer, sharpened her focus by calling the skills "the inner engines of learning."

"They are truly the never-ending report card," Rich says.

Rich and the staff of the MegaSkills Education Center, based in the nation's capital, show parents and community groups, teachers and others how to use everyday things such as doing laundry, pumping gas or paying bills as a springboard to teach common sense lessons.

Educators at first scoffed at her homespun approach, but now her MegaSkills program is in 48 states with nearly 3,000 schools supporting the effort and encouraging special training for nearly 2,200 teachers and parents. Special school workshops have reached more than 100,000 families and their children from all ethnic groups. Even Chinese publishers have approached Rich about making the program and her latest book available in China.

Funding has come from a number of foundations, including the MacArthur Foundation, the Sears-Roebuck Foundation, IBM, Kraft Foods and the Mott Foundation. The cost of her workshops runs from \$250 for one day to \$335 for two days.

What's the evidence that her program works? Rich says University of Memphis researchers reported television watching for local children decreased with increased time on homework as a result of MegaSkills. Austin, Texas, school district research shows MegaSkills students have higher scores on achievement tests with fewer discipline problems.

And a University of Louisville evaluation found the program improved school climate and work environment.

Jan Deeb, a family resource center coordinator, says the entire student body of 540 preschool through fifth-grade students at Milburn T. Maupin Elementary School, Louisville, has embraced the MegaSkills program — the first school in the nation to do so. For example, a math teacher may have children use a recipe to bake cookies, telling them to first match the right measurements before mixing them. The children become so preoccupied with whether one-fourth teaspoon of salt is more logical than one-fourth teaspoon of flour that they don't realize that problem solving, perseverance and teamwork are all being used to get the cookies baked.

"MegaSkills are reinforced at ev-

ery opportunity," Deeb says.

MegaSkills have taken on a life of their own. Rich's new book is the third MegaSkills edition. The first was in 1988, and the latest is being released only a few months after an interactive book "that adds whistles and bells" titled *What Do We Say? What Do We Do?* (\$12.95, Forge publishers).

Rich sees the need for MegaSkills every day. She takes note of an affluent day-care center near her home where parents drop off their children in big luxury cars like Land Rovers.

"They're not just buying bigger cars, they're buying protection for their children," Rich says. "Protection. They want to keep this ugly world out, and they want to keep all these other people away. But the real protection that they ought to be buying is inside that kid."

For More Information Contact:
*MegaSkills Education Center of
The Home and School Institute
1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20005
www.MegaSkillsHSI.org*

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The Recipes of Dorothy Rich

For years, educators scoffed at Dorothy Rich's homespun concoctions for involving parents in their children's education. Now, the creations that she has whipped up are in hot demand.

By Ann Bradley
Washington

These days, when it seems as though everyone is paying homage to the importance of families to their children's educational success, it's hard to imagine the obstacles that Dorothy Rich faced 30 years ago.

Back then, as a high school English teacher in Arlington, Va., she began puzzling over why some of her students were having trouble learning. High school teachers cast blame on middle schools. Middle schools disparaged elementary schools. And elementary schools pointed the finger at students' home lives.

Rich decided to try to do something to help families fulfill their educational role—a huge one in her opinion. But other educators weren't convinced. Schools, after all, prided themselves on having all the answers. Meanwhile, teaching was becoming more of a profession, Rich recalls, and what parents and kids did at home was viewed as "extraneous to the real work of education."

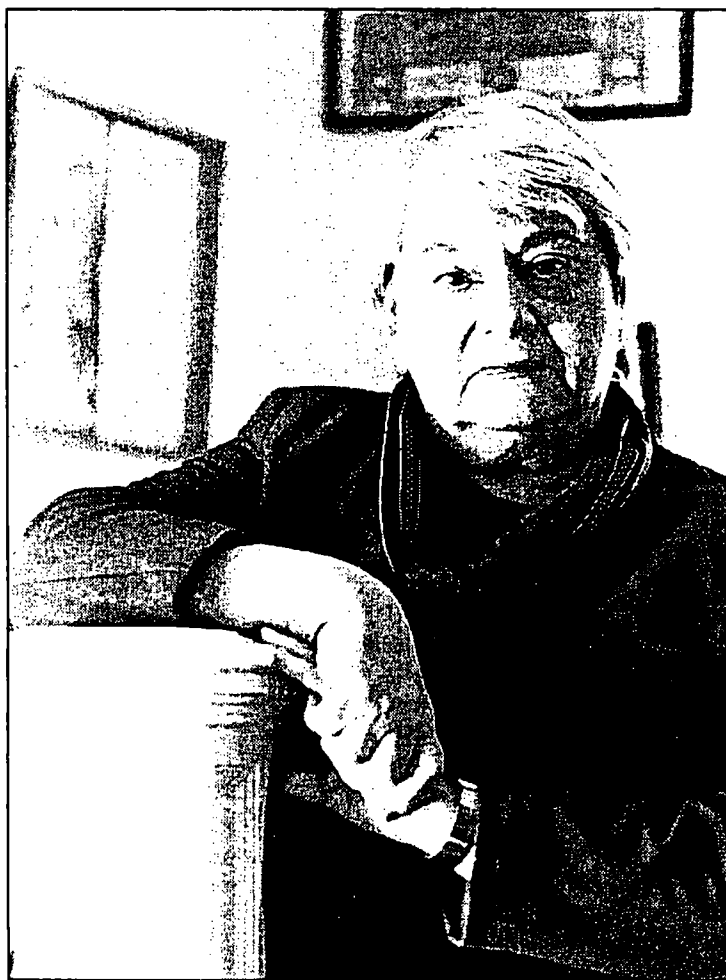
In 1965, she created a class called Success for Children Begins at Home. She used "home-learning recipes" to help parents understand how to use common household materials, objects, and activities to teach their children the skills and attitudes that they would need to thrive in school.

The reaction of most educators, she recollects, was: "Oh gosh, Dorothy, that's nice, but what we really need are reading specialists."

"They never quite said it outright like this, but the impression I got was that that was the sort of thing a woman would do."

Now "old enough to know better," Rich refused to be deterred. And for the past three decades, she has pursued her work with zeal and single-mindedness in a field whipsawed by fads.

Along the way, she's managed to sell 350,000 copies of her book *MegaSkills*; the third edition is due out this year. So is *What*



Benjamin Rice Smith

Do We Say? What Do We Do?, a book to help families cope with bad days at school. Her Home and School Institute, incorporated here in 1972, has trained 100,000 families in 48 states in the homespun arts of learning mathematics in the bathtub and playing matching games with egg cartons. Rich also has formed a new partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools to try to reach more parents in urban districts.

These are no small accomplishments, but

her work. "When you do something on the ground and very practical, it's very hard to get the same level of respect as when you produce a study. When somebody looks at something that you've worked hard to make easy to do—something that a parent can go home and do something with—it doesn't carry the same level of seriousness. Now that's got to change."

What has changed are attitudes toward parent involvement, now regarded as a key

Rich has had to struggle every step of the way. For nearly 18 years, her husband, Spencer, a *Washington Post* reporter who covers Social Security and health-care issues, was the institute's major financial supporter. During much of that time, the Riches reared and helped educate two daughters, now a doctor and a lawyer, in a spacious 100-year-old farmhouse in the city's Cleveland Park neighborhood.

Although she doesn't intend to complain, it's clear that Rich believes that her efforts haven't gotten the credit they deserve. "If I had been with Harvard, if I had been with Yale, or any of the prestigious universities, and not the Home and School Institute, which I started, people wouldn't question it in the same way," she says of

factor in students' achievement. And that delights Rich, although she thinks some people are wasting their time in trying to involve parents in running schools.

"There's a remarkable level of energy going into what I would call less productive kinds of parental involvement," she observes. "I have always been more interested, and I think the research evidence supports it, in what families do at home than in what they may do at school in a council or advisory panel. If I were given a choice between you volunteering in the classroom, or going around soliciting funds for your school, or coming to council meetings to discuss how long recess ought to be, I would opt to have you do reading or home-learning activities at home with your child.

"How many of you are taking a walk around the block and pointing to five different nature objects? Or how many have sat down and said to your child—which is one of our high school learning activities—'Come on, let's go look at our mortgage together. Let's go look at our insurance policy together.' I think the numbers are tiny. The parent doesn't know yet that that is a really important task."

Not everyone, of course, agrees with her. Phillip Harris, the director of professional development and services for the association, Phi Delta Kappan, notes that putting democracy into action by involving parents in decisionmaking can be messy.

"I would describe Dorothy as someone who likes to have things in order," says Harris, a supporter of shared decisionmaking efforts. "Her concern regarding whether parents need to be that involved in running the school is a fairly traditional view."

If Dorothy Rich had her way, every parent in America would understand his or her educational role clearly. If she had her way, towns would become "learning cities," schools would work seamlessly with families and communities, and home-learning recipes would be everywhere. "All of this stuff could just pour out of the gas stations and the grocery stores," she declares.

"I've got all these plans ready to go," Rich says. "I've got another thing in my files—my files are golden if we can only make some of these things happen—a whole public-information campaign for parents on what you can do, like math using the garbage can. I'm not ashamed about talking about what you do with a rug and a chair and a lamp."

Make no mistake, though. Rich is also conversant with more esoteric subjects and has done her share of swimming with the big fish here in Washington. She sat on the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for the national tests that are given periodically to gauge students' knowledge. But policy discussions don't touch her heart.

"I've been on some fancy panels," she says.



Sheila Teasley, left, Tanika Larkins, and Rogina Holt, holding her daughter, are taught simple ways to help their children learn at a MegaSkills training class for parents.

Benjamin Ice Smith

"I always find it interesting what intelligent, energetic, fair-minded people believe is important. It's like, 'Hey, come on guys. Three points on a test is not where it's at.' Where it's at is, we're looking to help to create in this society responsible, motivated people who work hard, who know that they're going to have to keep on learning all their lives."

Rich doesn't mention it, but she also has been instrumental in helping members of Congress to write legislation for the federal Title I program, which provides school districts with extra funds to educate poor children.

Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, says Rich is one of only a handful of people who influenced the parent-involvement component of the law. Title I now requires greater involvement of parents and community members through compacts that spell out the shared responsibility for improving achievement. She has worked closely with the Department of Education to write a book on how to form compacts.

Casserly has known Rich for some time. She persuaded him to submit a joint application for funding to Kraft Foods, which is underwriting the MegaSkills training in urban districts. Rich, he says, is "focused like a laser" on parent involvement.

"Maybe because I've been around a little while now, too, I've learned to appreciate endurance," he says. "She has it. Anytime you have a conversation with her, it's like you've known her your entire life. She's very hard to say no to. She's very aggressive without being abrasive."

The Home and School Institute also works closely with the National Education Association. For many years, Rich had a small office in the NEA's building on 16th Street here and notes proudly that she always paid the rent. But when the teachers' union renovated the building into much grander quarters, she was displaced by the soaring atrium and moved around the corner to modest digs on

the ground floor of a Massachusetts Avenue apartment building.

The NEA pays for MegaSkills training for teams of parents, teachers, and community workers in urban districts. The programs are now in seven cities, with an additional eight scheduled to start up this year. A judge in Trenton, N.J., has even mandated that some parents of troubled children get the training.

"MegaSkills works with all people, regardless of their race, religion, or their background," says Warlene Gary, the manager of the NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education. "Whether they don't read or have no education, they can really get into it. It really is a program that deals with people's value systems and how they were raised and what they are transferring to their kids."

Gary, who calls Rich "a real advocate," notes that people sometimes scoff at MegaSkills because it's so simple. "It's not rocket-science stuff," she acknowledges. "But it's what families need."

The inspiration for the MegaSkills book came from Don Cameron, the executive director of the nea and a member of the Home and School Institute's board of directors. On a visit to her office, he urged Rich to take the home-learning recipes she'd whipped up in various training programs and put them into a book, suggesting that she could be the "Dr. Spock of education."

First published in 1988, the book crystallized Rich's thinking about what it really takes for kids to make it. Its original title was along the lines of *Basic Skills Plus*, reflecting the intense interest in fundamental skills at that time. But its author wasn't quite comfortable with the name. "It came to me that I was talking about something I considered more important, and my husband gave me this wonderful phrase: inner engines of learning."

The list of MegaSkills came from school

report cards and job-performance evaluations—what Rich calls life's "never-ending report card." They are confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense, and problem solving. For the third edition of the book, she is adding focus because so many children today seem distracted and unable to concentrate.

While some people may think such traits are innate or the result of parenting that can't necessarily be taught, Rich begs to differ. She also insists that the MegaSkills activities are firmly grounded in academics and shun an emphasis on self-esteem and "touchy-feely stuff." The new edition of the book, in fact, will identify the academic objectives for every activity.

"I just want to make sure that people know that, gosh darn it, academics isn't just something that's sitting in a textbook."

The home-learning activities were designed to take up little time, be easy to do, and cost nothing. But the payoffs can be great, Rich asserts.

Take Mystery Word Box for ages 5 to 9. With a recipe-card box, index cards, and alphabet dividers, families can help their children learn new words. The youngsters pick five words that appeal to them, and the parent writes them on the cards. Then families discuss the words and save them to use another day. Rich herself did the exercises with her daughters.

"During the day, I would sometimes find my child on her bed, the contents of the mystery word box set out before her," Rich writes. "These were her very own words, and she would be playing with them, saying them aloud, caressing them with her voice."

Older children, ages 7 to 9, can do The Long Receipt, checking grocery purchases against the supermarket receipt to make sure that the items match up correctly.

A favorite of hers is A Special Place for ages 4 to 9. Children decorate large cardboard boxes any way they like and park them by the front door to hold their belongings.

"The box is the first stop for school items, hat, toys, glasses," Rich writes. "It is the last stop on the way out the door in the morning. Finished homework and supplies needed for school are put in the box at night, ready for the next day."

The exercise teaches children responsibility, but also helps families get their act together. "We spend a lot of time in our program on how to organize your house so that things are there and there's a sense of scheduling," Rich says.

Although she would have been content to write the book and let it just "waft through the airwaves," Rich realized that she would have to create a companion training program if she were going to reach many people.

The Home and School Institute's MegaSkills Education Center has 15 field



A mother and son work on a home-learning recipe at Harriet Tubman Elementary School in Washington in a home environment that Dorothy Rich designed in the 1970s.

associates located across the country who provide one- and two-day workshops for groups of 20 to 25 teachers, social workers, administrators, guidance counselors, and others. The training is expensive: \$250 per person for one day, \$335 for two days. If the participants conduct five successful workshops for parents, they can become certified as MegaSkills leaders and continue their outreach to parents. There are now some 1,500 such leaders.

The institute also offers a MegaSkills program for classroom teachers and provides training for schools and parent-leaders in building effective partnerships.

Rich believes that teachers' most important job is to "make a synergy happen between the schoolroom and the home and the community."

"There may still be some lack of vision about what teachers really have to be able to do," she says. "Not even the best school can do the job alone. Everybody nods, yes, yes, but we continue to teach teachers as if that's what really happens."

Rich's biggest customers are Title I administrators, but the MegaSkills training has been purchased with Head Start, dropout-prevention, drug-prevention, and special education funds, to name a few. It also has spread beyond schools. Private companies offer training for their employees, as do some shelters for battered women and the homeless.

While the focus of MegaSkills is on the child, Rich says that the people who appear to benefit the most are parents—particularly those who lack confidence or have little education. She's now studying Spanish to work more closely with Hispanic parents, many of whom haven't traditionally seen themselves as their children's first teachers.

Independent evaluations of the programs' impact have found fewer discipline problems, higher attendance rates, increased homework and parent-child time, and reduced

television watching after parents and teachers had been trained.

Rich concedes that she's "a real fusspot about program integrity." But she knows that she's going to have to adapt if she wants to reach more people. Under the partnership with the Council of the Great City Schools, she will use a trainer-of-trainer model in three cities to prepare more teachers and others to work with families.

The transition could be hard. Harris of Phi Delta Kappan recalls that Rich was hesitant about linking up five years ago. Now, the Home and School Institute trains teachers each year at PDK's summer institute in Bloomington, Ind.

"I had to convince her that I would nurture and protect MegaSkills, that we weren't going to be abusive in some way," Harris says.

Over the years, Rich has worked with the District of Columbia public schools. She fondly recalls the "home-learning rooms" that she set up in the city's schools in the 1970s to help teach special education parents to work with their children. Decorated to look like the kitchen, bedroom, and living room of a house, the rooms were used to demonstrate appropriate home-learning recipes. "That's still a great design," she says. "I wish we could go back and do some of that again."

Rich's influence is still felt through MegaSkills, which is used by trainers in the schools' parent-involvement office.

Janice Melvin, an associate with the district's parent-involvement team, has been offering MegaSkills workshops at Birney Elementary School in the Anacostia neighborhood for two years. Last year, only six parents showed up. But last month, she found 25 parents—including two fathers—in the school library for a session on Initiative and Perseverance.

"Not many schools have this many parents," Melvin says. "This is a good group. It's

very responsive," she notes.

For an hour, the group hunts through newspapers in search of examples of people showing initiative, talks about how to get children to follow through on tasks, and learns about activities that can replace wasted television-viewing time.

Melvin recommends My Special Garden, a recipe for growing seeds that enables youngsters to see a finished product sprout on their kitchen-window sill. One mother offers that her child was taking care of a plant that has since dried up.

Rogina Holt pays close attention as she holds her sleeping 1-month-old daughter, La-Cora. "I like stuff like this," says Holt, who also has 3-year-old twin boys. "I do all that stuff at home. I go over their colors with them, and their words with them, and their 1-2-3s."

Carol Blassingame, the mother of a 5-year-old Head Start child, says the tips are helpful. "We've been doing exercises in the book—making little cookies and playing little games."

Melvin is thrilled to reach parents of preschool children to instill good habits early. She calls Rich "a down-to-earth person anybody can talk to."

It is small victories like these that keep Rich on track.

"Every once in a while, somebody says, 'What made you keep on doing this?' " she says. "I hate to sound self-righteous—that's a very dangerous thing—or virtuous, but I always believed it was important. Always." ■

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About HSI/MegaSkills Education Center

The major focus of the work of the nonprofit Home and School Institute (HSI) and its MegaSkills® Education Center, is to help families and educators build children's achievement in school and beyond. Since 1972, HSI has worked with school districts, federal, state and local government agencies, businesses and community organizations. Family literacy and the needs of at-risk students are fundamental Institute concerns.

- **MegaSkills Leader Training Seminars** train instructors to conduct workshops for families to help children develop MegaSkills.
- **MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom** provides training for teachers to teach MegaSkills directly to children in the classroom.
- **The New MegaSkills Bond** builds school and family/community partnerships.
- **MegaSkills Schools** combine all of the trainings in an achievement process for school wide programs.

The work of HSI, has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Reader's Digest, NBC Today, Good Morning America and numerous professional education publications. With over 20 years of experience, the Institute provides coordinated, tested programs for educational progress.

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You Can't Teach What You Don't Know

Why 'Children First!' Is the Wrong Educational Mantra

By Dorothy Rich

We're trained to say, "Children first!" I used to say it, too. It's become a kind of mantra. But really, it's putting the cart before the horse. If we are to educate our children well, I believe it should be "Parents and teachers first!": first in the line of responsibility, first to have the abilities and the capacities to work with and do well by children.

This is not about ungenerously looking out for the welfare of grownups when we should be thinking about children. Actually, when we say, "Children first," it sounds nice but it's based on the wrong-headed assumption that adults already know and have what they need in order to teach children.

This is not necessarily so. Many adults today feel overwhelmed by the complexity, the sense of change, and the speed of daily life. It's clear that many parents have a hard time acting like parents.

Maybe adults just don't get made the way we thought they were made in the old days—automatically responsible, with common sense, wisdom, and mature judgment.

Or maybe adults in the old days didn't need to be all that wise. But, today, they do. While it's a softer world in some ways, it's a harder world in which to raise and educate children. Virtually everyone I know who has grown children says, "I'm glad I don't have to raise children these days."

There seems to be agreement that there's an erosion of what used to be "rules." We're inundated by rampant commercialism and celebrity hype. There's a sleaze pollution, like dirty air, swirling all about us. It's hard to protect our children, and it's very discouraging for adults.

Teachers and parents, more than before,

need more strength, more commitment, more capacity as grownups. To have this strength, adults need support, encouragement, and specific help, inside and outside the classroom.

I know this from the teacher and parent groups I work with across the nation. There is a sense of helplessness, even among well-educated parents and teachers. There is a fear and there is frustration about children's education. If only worry could do the job, we'd be fine. Instead it takes personal and professional adult competencies. That's why I say, "Parents and teachers first."

Recently, when some dismal teacher-test scores were released in Massachusetts, there arose a cry in our collective media consciousness: "Teachers can't teach what they do not know!" And there was a national nodding of heads in agreement.

This concern isn't just about reading and math. We make major assumptions about teachers' abilities well beyond test scores. We expect that teachers can design effective homework assignments. We expect that they can talk knowledgeably with parents. We expect a lot ... and we usually don't provide the training for it.

Take, for example, the homely, everyday business of homework and the advice given to parents. This advice takes a myriad of complex adult competencies to use. Here's some picked at random from a typical list:

- Set aside a study place and a regular study time. (*This assumes that parents know how to organize their own lives.*)
- Enforce the idea that homework takes highest priority over other activities. (*This assumes that parents communicate to children the importance of a good education.*)
- Present and enforce meaningful consequences for when homework is not completed. (*This assumes that parents know how to discipline children in constructive ways.*)
- Motivate children to do a good job on their homework. (*This assumes that parents have strategies that can turn bored students into excited ones.*)
- Build children's confidence in themselves as good students. (*This assumes that parents themselves have a strong*

sense of themselves as learners.)

- Encourage children to go beyond their typical homework to look up more words and take the next steps in the assignments. (*This assumes that parents demonstrate learning initiative in their own lives.*)

- Help children set goals about their assignments and how much effort it will take to do well. (*This assumes that parents are experienced goal-setters in their own lives.*)

- Talk with the teachers if there are problems about homework. Is it too easy? Too hard? Not enough? Too much? (*This assumes that parents have sufficient self-confidence to have this kind of discussion with teachers.*)

That's just for starters. The advice given to teachers sounds easy as well, but it's very hard to do. Among the recommendations: Communicate with parents; motivate kids; teach good study habits; make assignments focused and clear; set good rules and stick to them.

Just because we give people good advice does not mean this advice will be taken.

Those of us in the field produce long lists of studies, readings, and advice. For over 30 years, I have been among the list-makers and advice-givers. But it was not until I set about creating a comprehensive skills-development program in 1987 that I began to understand more about what adults need in order to make use of all the data and the models—no matter how good these are.

Adults need to feel able to take advice, even good advice. They need the confidence and the initiative and the common sense, among other attributes, that enable them to benefit from advice. And children.

Continued on Page 2

Dorothy Rich is the founder and president of the nonprofit Home and School Institute in Washington. She is the author of MegaSkills and the developer of the MegaSkills teacher training programs. Her book MegaSkills Moments for Teachers is available this fall from the National Education Association.

to be effective learners, need adults who exhibit these competencies.

That is why my work has focused on meeting the needs of adults and children, rather than on the administrative structure of schools. The changes I seek are personal changes. These in turn create the learning relationships that build and sustain educational achievement. The role of the adult is the vital key.

Parents and teachers both are under attack today as never before. We're told that adults are letting kids down, not doing our job, et cetera. As educators, we know more about children, more about learning. We know more about what we, and especially parents, are supposed to do. But just because we know more doesn't mean that we are using what we've learned. When it comes to education, the ability to use what we know doesn't always come naturally.

In an era when the education headlines focus on test scores and technology (the two T's), we still have to focus on the big R: relationships. It's all very well to spotlight test scores. But to build test scores, we first build people, kids and adults included. I am not talking about vapid self-esteem concepts, but specific competencies every one of us can learn. Education is a very human, very "messy" enterprise. Even in the age of computers, it's still a person-to-person connection.

Last year, the initial report from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health assessed the key variables in children's overall health and reported unequivocally that "connectedness to family and to school" is the major determiner. (*See Education Week, Sept. 17, 1997.*) How do we build this connectedness? We do it by putting parents and teachers first, so that basic relationships build the safety net for student learning.

To complete the tasks of their profession, educators today have a remarkable group of programs to choose among. In fact, there is such choice and such variety that it's often hard to know where to start. I'd like to suggest three criteria. Whatever programs we select, including those for academics and technology, need to:

- Simultaneously build the capacities of adults while building the abilities of the children.
- Remember the importance of relationships between the institution of school and the individual student and family. Use programs and strategies that provide specific, practical ways for families to build children's connections to schools.
- Focus on the real "basics" of education today: creating ongoing capacities and

competencies for learning; and have the patience and commitment it takes, not just for more-immediate, better test scores, but to help children and their educating adults become stronger learners for longer lives.

We can no longer ignore the needs of teaching adults. We all live longer. We keep learning longer. Student capacities for learning are built by parents and teachers whose own capacities for learning are extended and reinforced. That's what putting parents and teachers first is all about—meeting children's needs in the most basic way of all. ■

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HRM Magazine[®]

ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Parents, Kids Learn the 'Super-basics'

BY STEPHENIE OVERMAN

MegaSkills, the community-based educational program, gets an A+ from business and parents.

What helps parents hone their skills, improves employees' problem-solving skills on the job, and ensures a better-skilled workforce for the future? MegaSkills, according to its track record.

To improve the "super-basics, the

inner engines of learning," Dorothy Rich developed the MegaSkills program. After studying school report cards and job performance evaluations, Rich concluded that there are super-basics, or mega skills, that everyone needs. She has spent the past 27 years teaching parents how to improve their children's academic experience.

"MegaSkills are the values, the attitudes, the behaviors that determine our success in school and on the job," she says. "They form what I call 'The Never-Ending Report Card.'"

- Confidence
- Motivation
- Effort
- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Perseverance
- Caring
- Teamwork
- Common sense
- Problem solving

A teacher and the founder of The Home and School Institute, Rich wrote the first edition of the book *MegaSkills* in 1988. Since then, more than 3,500 leaders have been trained

SHRM's Initiative for Education

Because of concern that the educational system in the United States was falling short in imparting critical values, attitudes and behaviors, the Society for Human Resource Management launched its own educational initiative in November 1993, "Becoming Workforce Ready: Educating Today's Students for Tomorrow's Workplace." The initiative focuses on kindergarten through 12th grade.

Antonio Rivera, chairman of SHRM's Education Committee, says that since the U.S. educational system is not adequately preparing all its students for the real world, human resource profes-

sionals and their companies must become more deeply involved.

"It takes a village to educate a child," Rivera quotes, and it takes business leaders acting as village elders to make sure the educational system succeeds.

The committee does not endorse any one educational program, says Rivera, vice president of personnel operations for USAA in San Antonio, Texas, preferring to see human resource professionals use what works best in their own communities. But, like businesses and communities around the country, his own company has adopted the MegaSkills approach.



in the program and they, in turn, have provided workshops for more than 60,000 parents in 42 states.

Rich's goal, she said in her book, was to "come up with a system that works and share it. Don't make it too hard or too long. Make it look so simple, so easy, that everyone can do it. Make it practical. Make it enjoyable. Remember, it doesn't take a lot of time to do a lot of good."

Her program uses everyday things, like doing laundry or paying bills, and familiar places, like supermarkets or gas stations, as springboards for parents to teach common-sense lessons.

BUSINESS/SCHOOL LINK

The MegaSkills program is ideal for the business community, and businesses are an ideal conduit for the program, says Rae Nelson. Nelson is

COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS ARE BEST, AND SMALL BUSINESSES ARE NATURAL LEADERS.

executive director of the Center for Workplace Preparation and Quality Education, a nonprofit agency funded by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The chamber represents approximately 216,000 businesses, 85 percent of them small businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

The center advocates educational reform through a grassroots network of small-business owners, the majority of whom are parents themselves and have a ready network of parents in their workforces, Nelson says.

"Community-based solutions are best, and small businesses are natural leaders," she believes. "When they

define an issue as an economic issue—and we are at the stage now where preparing youth to be responsible citizens is an economic issue—they have a vested interest and they have credibility."

Nelson sees MegaSkills as a good program for the business community because "it is organized and operates in a language business can understand.

"Business and education operate in different ways—education still uses a top-down approach. Education is where business was about 20 years ago." With its practical strategy, MegaSkills bridges that gap, she says. "It brings folks together. It may

SINGLE PARENTS AND WORKING SPOUSES NEED HELP WITH CHILD REARING SO THAT DOMESTIC PROBLEMS DON'T BECOME PERFORMANCE ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE.

sound like simple common sense, but it does what needs to be done."

For too long, the trend to improve education has been scatter-shot, according to Nelson. Business, used to applying total quality principles, is interested in the long-term, strategic approach.

"There's a move toward looking at a strategic national focus," she says, and "Rich has been able to identify what works in a real concrete manner and has been working with individuals across the nation to explain what it takes. It's not just a one-time approach."

AVOIDING HOME/WORK PROBLEMS

"Single parents and working spouses need help with child rearing so that domestic problems don't become performance issues in the workplace," says James Bentley, director of human resources for Fort Wayne Newspapers Inc. in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Fort Wayne Newspapers Inc. has long had an active work/family committee with traditional family-friendly policies such as job sharing, Bentley says. "But when we started looking at issues that are of importance to our people, when we looked at productivity issues, we found that home and work cannot be totally separated. If there are problems at home, they tend to find their way into the work environment."

The human resource professional is playing an increasingly critical role in this area, according to Nelson, identifying needs and keeping everyone focused on those needs, identifying programs and seeing to it that they are implemented.

"HR people have to figure out ways to keep on top of all this information," she says. "HR always has been a network facilitator. Now the HR person has to become the coach, the person who is positioning everybody."

The program, which Bentley first learned about through his local Chamber of Commerce, is in its third year in Fort Wayne. The advantage to MegaSkills is that "you can run your own program. Each one is a separate training initiative. You're not dependent on lots of other people; there aren't a lot of costs. You can custom tailor the program to your audience, so that you're talking about issues that are really on their minds."

The program applies to children of all ages, he says, with parents grouped by the ages of their children so that

they can address specific issues.

The program does not necessarily fall to the human resources department, Bentley adds. "I'm the one who discovered it here, but social service agencies in Fort Wayne and teachers are now active. It's switched from industrial driven to education and social services driven.

"It gives us in industry the opportunity to interface with the educational community on a program we agree on. The business community has been at odds for years over the product educators were producing, but we all agree on MegaSkills."

TURN HOME CHORES INTO LESSONS

MegaSkills teaches parents how to get maximum results for their time by showing how to turn chores around the house into simple lessons, Bentley says. But a further benefit, he adds, is that "it's nice to know as a parent that you're not an island. It's nice to share your successes. That's one of the real benefits—people come out of the program with a greater sense of confidence."

And, although MegaSkills is geared toward children, it helps the parents'

relationships with other people as well, particularly co-workers.

"People are able to look at issues like motivation and effort and see that these are the same issues that are important at work. In teaching parents, we get a residual effect—first parents are able to use the home skills to help their children and then as employees they learn some things themselves. They make the connection. They see how important it is to the child and also how that transcends itself into the workplace." ■

Stephenie Overman is senior writer for HRMagazine.

For more information about the program and Dorothy Rich's new book *The New MegaSkills Bond*, contact Home and School Institute, Megaskills Center, 1500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 466-3633

Business Reactions to MegaSkills®

Austin, Texas

"There exists a parallel relationship between the success of adults in both the role of the parent and employee. MegaSkills classes at IBM helped employees solidify their attitude and values in parenting as well as their performance on the job. Confidence, responsibility, teamwork, and common sense are just a few of the MegaSkills that can teach adults how to be successful both on the job, as a parent and to their child's success in school and life. Having the classes at IBM sent a strong message to employees that the company cared about their personal life, and the managers fully supported this program.:"

Sam Zigrossi, Executive
Education Business Unit
IBM, Austin, TX

Fort Wayne, Indiana

"Single parents and working spouses need help with child rearing so that domestic problems don't become performance issues in the workplace. MegaSkills is a turn-key program that relates to work/family issues and provides lifetime skills vs. short term impact, as well as off-the-shelf convenience to the instructor/facilitator. I recommend this program without reservation."

James Bentley, Director, Human Resources
Fort Wayne Newspapers
Fort Wayne, IN

Rahway, New Jersey

"Business is looking for cost-effective, no-frills, direct action to improve education. I know of no better program than MegaSkills."

J. Douglas Phillips, Senior Director
Corporate Planning
Merck & Company, Inc.

MegaSkills program a plus for children, parents, schools

Editor's Note: The MegaSkills program, created by veteran educator Dorothy Rich, is a collection of activities that are taught to parents so they can help their children learn at home, do well in school and, ultimately, succeed in life. The program is part of the Home and School Institute, Rich's nonprofit educational organization. Here, special education teacher Judy Brim of Sacramento, Calif., tells about her experiences with MegaSkills and how the program created a situation in which her students, their parents and her school came out winners.

By Judy Brim

It was 6 p.m. on a Monday night in May 1992 in our elementary school library. The cookies and punch were ready; sign-in sheets and handouts were near the door, printed in English, Spanish and Cantonese.

My two teen-age child-care providers were ready and waiting in the next classroom. I took a deep breath and greeted the rather apprehensive-looking woman who came through the door to my very first MegaSkills Parent Workshop. My heart raced as more parents walked in, looked around and found seats. As my Chinese-speaking interpreter greeted a large group of preschool parents, I was grateful to recognize some of the people who came in as parents of children in my Resource Specialist Program.

I knew that, regardless of the language spoken at home, economic status or their own educational level, all these parents were here because they wanted to help their children be more successful in school and in life. It was time to begin talking about MegaSkills.

I don't recall much about that first parent workshop, but it certainly inspired me. Since then, I have met hundreds of mothers, fathers, grandparents, older siblings, foster parents, day-care workers and other child-care providers who enthusiastically participated in a number of the four-week series of MegaSkills workshops in the Sacramento City Unified School District.

I am firmly convinced that the MegaSkills program creates a win-win-win setup. Parents, the first and most important teachers of our students, win as they learn ways to help themselves and their children; schools win as parents empower themselves to participate more actively at school; and, ultimately, the children win as home, school and community develop common vocabulary, closer bonds and greater understanding of our shared needs, strengths and goals.

From day one, I had absolute faith in the MegaSkills program to make a tremendous difference in the ways parents could contribute to their children's school and life achievement. What I didn't realize was what a significant effect it could have on the parents themselves, empowering them to move into meaningful roles as participants

within the school structure, as well as strengthening their role at home as their children's first and most important teachers.

In this article, I will share briefly how I have seen MegaSkills influence and increase parental involvement — both at home and within the school environment.

In 1987, a Berkeley, Calif., bookstore buyer gave me a preview copy of Dorothy Rich's book, *MegaSkills — How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond*. From the moment I began browsing through it, I could feel my excitement grow.

This book presented hands-on, easy-to-understand "recipes" for parents to help their children develop internal habits, attitudes and behaviors leading to success in and out of school. These "inner engines of learning" were the 10 MegaSkills: confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense and problem solving.

Nobody I knew in Northern California had ever heard of MegaSkills, but I knew I had discovered something very valuable and tried to find out more about MegaSkills and the Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C.

It was not until March 1992, almost five years later, that, thanks to a frequent flyer voucher, an income-tax return, and MegaSkill Six (perseverance), I finally managed to get myself to a MegaSkills Leader Workshop in Washington, D.C.

When I returned to Sacramento, I knew that if I didn't begin leading workshops right away, I would find dozens of reasons to stall and I'd probably never get started. In MegaSkills terminology, my confidence was lacking but I was extremely motivated, so I took a deep breath and, with a gentle push from my school principal, jumped in.

At our April Open House, I announced the upcoming workshop series of free classes for four Monday evenings with childcare provided, and signed up as many parents as I could. We sent announcements home in English, Spanish and Chinese, and I visited every class in the school, urging students to bring their parents.

I also made telephone calls to the parents of my Resource Specialist Program students, urging them to attend.

Our efforts and perseverance paid off. That first night there were more than 30 people present, an outstanding turnout for a parent population that had a notoriously poor attendance record for conferences and PTA meetings.

More than half of those present attended at least three of the four workshops in the series and proudly received certificates at the end in our "graduation" ceremony.

Even more gratifying, however, has been the noticeable — and to me, unexpected — change in group dynamics and in individuals through the weeks of each workshop series.

(Over)

MegaSkills: Empowering schools, families, students

The first night, most of the parents come in quietly, sit at tables stiffly and are reluctant to participate in small or large group discussions, especially with people they haven't known prior to the workshop. As the weeks pass, however, the energy in the room changes dramatically: Parents who cannot speak each other's languages are smiling and nodding at one another, people bring treats to share, laughter and conversation are heard throughout each evening's activities.

When parents turn to me, the workshop leader and perceived "expert" with a specific problem or concern, I turn it back to the group and members share what has worked for them at home. Brainstorming this way often provides us with many more solutions than any of us could have dreamed possible.

One parent of a 10-year-old girl contacted me about six months after her participation in the workshops to tell me she felt like she was living with a completely different child. We both laughed when I suggested that perhaps the changes had not occurred solely within her daughter.

Not only have I observed great changes occurring within groups because of MegaSkills, but I have also seen amazing growth in individual participants. One particular participant stands out: Rosa, a graduate of that very first workshop series. We met through her son Oscar, a second-grader in my Resource Specialist Program. Rosa, a mother for the first time at 14, had two babies when she graduated from high school; when she came to MegaSkills she had five children. Both she and her fiancé, Marco, attended the series of four workshops, covering for each other when one could not be there.

After participating in the workshop and

trying a number of the activities at home with her children, Rosa began volunteering at school as a lunch-time playground supervisor.

The following year, she stood up in front of a large group and gave a spirited pitch in Spanish for the MegaSkills workshops at Back-to-School Night. She and Marco served as child-care providers for subsequent parent workshops, and she began assisting in the school library.

Currently, Rosa is serving as president of our school's previously dormant PTA, as well as other activities. Most recently, she went through the MegaSkills training to become a Workshop Leader and plans to conduct workshops in Spanish for Latino parents in Sacramento.

I have learned a lot since leading that first set of MegaSkills workshops. I would not conduct a workshop in more than two languages again — ever.

Whenever possible, I call parents who have signed up to attend the day before to remind them of the day and time. I try to keep child-care limited to ages 3 to 10. I send postcards to participants after the first night, thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to return the following week.

I make sure there are snacks for both children and parents. I try to schedule workshops in early fall or late spring rather than, say, November and February, because more parents will attend when it stays light later into the evening.

I now limit myself to one night a week; trying to run two sets of classes concurrently was too confusing — and exhausting.

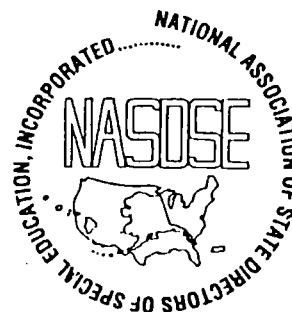
Many MegaSkills graduates have been clamoring for additional classes so, in the future, I hope to offer "MegaSkills II," a series of different workshops with additional activities. One of the many wonderful aspects of this program is that each

weekly workshop stands alone, so parents feel comfortable attending one or all within a series.

Because learning is even more powerful when school and family understand the same concepts and can use the same vocabulary, the MegaSkills Education Center developed the *MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom* curriculum, which prepares teachers to introduce MegaSkills to children in classrooms at all the elementary grade levels.

Additionally, a number of private corporations are now offering MegaSkills workshops as part of their Employee Assistance Programs in order to develop a more successful and productive work force for the present and future.

For information about the programs of the Home and School Institute, contact the MegaSkills Education Center at 1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20005, (202) 466-3633.



Enseñando destrezas para triunfar

POR JOHANNA BECHHOLTZ-TORRES

Cuando hablo del papel educacional de la familia, puede que suene algo anticuado. Sin embargo, muchos de los padres de hoy en día nunca aprendieron, o han olvidado, lo que necesitan hacer en casa para sentar los cimientos del éxito escolar de sus niños", afirma Dorothy Rich, presiden-



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La clave de su éxito

Según Rich, "el gran resultado de estos programas es que los padres aprenden estas destrezas y se convierten en modelos para sus hijos. Ellos no pueden darse el lujo de cruzarse de brazos. Tienen un papel que jugar en la vida de sus niños", agrega.

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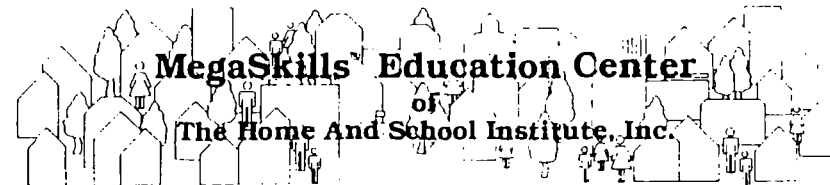


A⁺ for Breaking the Mold

Award

Recognizing: **MegaSkills**[®]

For Efforts To Reach the National Education Goals



Helping families build children's achievement in school and beyond
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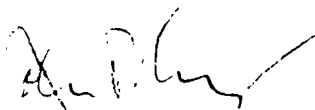
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to share with you my personal experience with the Mega Skills Program. I recently became aware of the program and was instantly excited by the fact that it is a program that focuses on building a synergistic educational relationship between the school, the child's home and the community--a partnership which in my opinion is strongly in need of strengthening.

As part of my exploration of Mega Skills, I visited a school where the program had been in place and personally met with teachers, parents and administrators. I was surprised at how the program was universally praised. Teachers reported that it was an excellent tool for them to use to supplement existing classroom work and they appear to truly value the Program as a tool versus viewing it as another "Program" being passed down to them which doesn't meet their in-class needs. Administrators reported that the program was relatively easy to implement and did not require significant resources from the schools. Most impressive, however, was the overwhelming excitement and appreciation for the program expressed by parents. I found that many of the parents had previously not come to school; did not participate as actively in their child's education as they do now; and were not augmenting in-school educational efforts with their own at home efforts as they do now. One mother commented that she used to think that being a good mother meant doing everything for her child, but now she knows that the children need to learn how to do for themselves, whether it's making their bed, cleaning their room or taking the trash out.

I would encourage anyone interested in improving education, and who recognizes the important connection between the parents and the school, to consider Mega Skills.

Sincerely,



John P. Munz
Regional Human Resources Manager
Western Region

JPM/sl



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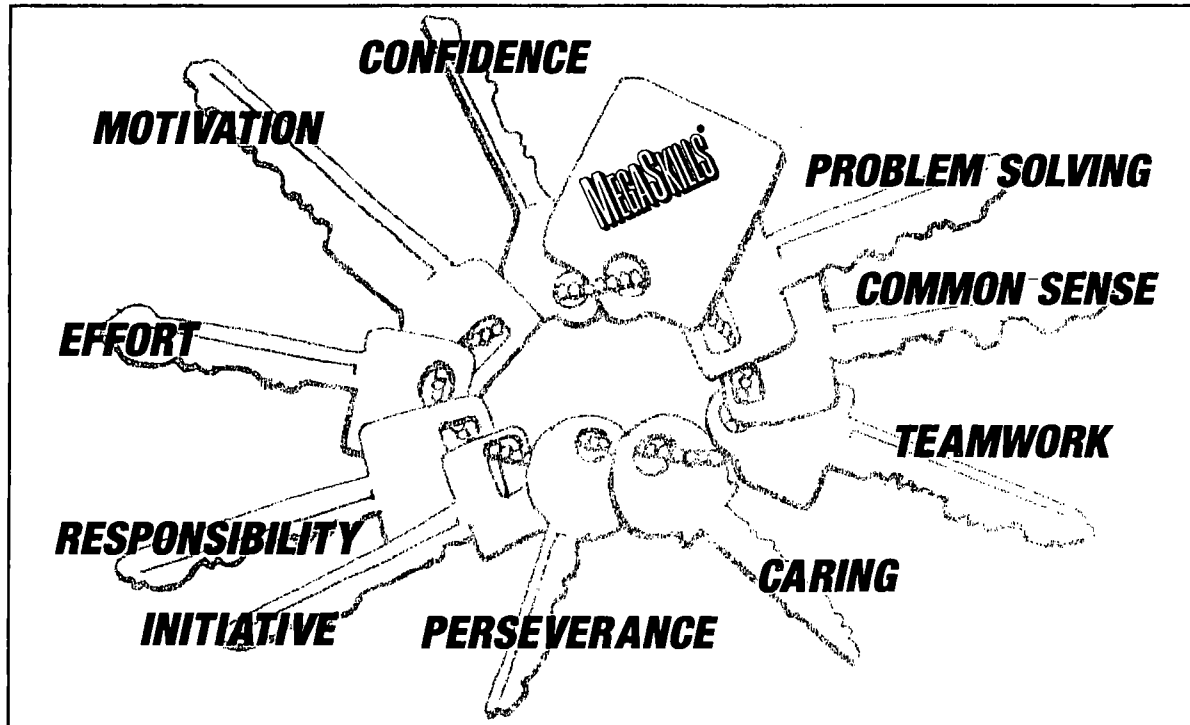
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the habits, behaviors and attitudes that
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in school and in life.

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- *Classroom Curriculum*
- *School-Wide Programs*

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- Title I
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- Even Start
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- Special Education
- Bilingual Education
- Juvenile Justice
- Comer Schools
- ...and more

Tested Results

- ✓ Higher achievement scores
- ✓ Fewer discipline problems
- ✓ Higher attendance rates
- ✓ Increased homework time
- ✓ Decreased TV time
- ✓ Increased participation by all families in children's education

Program Benefits

- Immediately reaches wide number of teachers and families
- Cost effective: ongoing use of program years after original training
- Integrates academic, social, and emotional skills

Compensatory Education Funds support MegaSkills training programs. Businesses and Chambers of Commerce also support the programs.

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Learning attitude and behaviors were consistently reported for over 2/3 of the students. These include more interest in learning (80% of students); more organized and ready for learning (74%); completes homework more regularly (78%); more able to work cooperatively (79%)

Details on these findings are reported on the pages that follow.

Program Description

San Diego was one of three large city schools selected for the implementation of the Home and School Institute's MegaSkills Parent Workshop Program under grants from Kraft Foods, jointly administered by The Home and School Institute and the Council of the Great City Schools.

In the first year of the program seven Comer schools participated in the program. A cadre of parent workshop leaders from each school was trained in how to give MegaSkills Parent Workshops. To serve San Diego's multi-ethnic population, the staff trained included native speakers of the major language groups served by the schools, and materials for parents were available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Lao, Cambodian and Somali translation.

EDUCATION WEEK

San Diego Education's Newspaper of Record

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Competing for Our Clients

Winning the Hearts and Minds of Parents

By Dorothy Rich

Public schools no longer have a built-in, zoned-in—public. Schools have to win their clients, their students, the hard way. The charters are coming and so are the vouchers. We can't just say that they will go away. They may run their course, but not until the test scores come in... a few years down the way.

about education, demands that schools begin to market themselves as businesses do. Is this demeaning? Crass? Degrading? I don't think so.

One of the basic questions I ask in the training programs I conduct is this: "In two or three sentences, why would parents want to send their child to your school?" If people have trouble answering this, they may well have trouble keeping their schools open.

It's certainly time that schools paid more attention to parents and children as customers. This doesn't mean bowing and scraping to make their every demand a reality. But it does mean making our schools more ap-

When parents opt out of the system in favor of different schools, what are they looking for? They are seeking standards, achievement, and high expectations, to be sure. But they are also seeking something more. Here's a quick summary of what I hear from parents across the nation:

- They are seeking some greater form of personal control, some sense that they can express their consumer activism on behalf of their children.
- They are seeking a code of behavior and standards and expectations about how children should act in school.
- They are seeking a school atmosphere that rewards high standards of

...which we do in the meantime. We can't run and hide. My recommendation is that we get out in front and compete with these education attractions. It can be a lot easier than we might think.

For example, one of the attractions of charters and vouchers is the promise they seem to hold of more personal attention. This is a major new force in education. We work with parents and community today not simply because the research says this is the way to raise achievement. We do it because these are our clients, and they expect a level of personal service that parents in the past did not. Some parental expectations may be too high, of course, even unrealistic, but to dismiss them out of hand or to fail to work with parents to understand limits and possibilities would be foolhardy in a consumer age.

The impact of a consumer culture, coupled with real worries parents have

pealing. We have to pay attention.

This is a message increasingly understood by districts across the country. A principal quoted in the Fort Myers, Fla., *News-Press* this year on that city's new public-school-choice program put it this way: "We're selling our programs and organization, which would be similar to what a businessman would do. I think students will see us as a viable option for learning. It's really a matter of, if we're not pulling in the kids, then we have to work harder."

Parents have concerns beyond academics for their younger children. Transportation is an issue. They want schools close to home, so that their kids are not bused across town. They want their children to be with the classmates they have known in earlier grades. Some parents may even move their children from school to school until they get what they perceive to be the right fit.

achievement and behavior and provides disincentives to out-of-control and disruptive students.

- They are seeking a sense that achievement by their children can mean something—that when their children work hard, they will be rewarded.

- They are seeking a sense of greater personal attention—that the school cares about their child, their home, and them.

These realistic expectations deserve to be met. They are not pie in the sky. Public schools that dismiss the message that charters and vouchers are sending do it at their peril. It is a useful message, a reminder we need. And public schools, with their resources and experience, are actually in a stronger position to meet these expect-

Continued on Page 2

Enseñando destrezas para triunfar

Por JOHANNA BUCHHEITZ TORRES

Cuando hablo del papel educacional de la familia, puede que suene algo antecedido. Sin embargo, muchos de los padres de hoy en día nunca aprendieron, o han olvidado, lo que necesitan hacer en casa para sentar los cimientos del éxito escolar de sus niños", afirma Dorothy Rich, presiden-



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AUGUST 1999

MegaSkills Education Center of the Home and School Institute
Communications

Announcing *Back To School with MegaSkills® and Reading*

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MegaSkills: Keeping Schools Safe and Children Learning

As a special service, starting August 1, 1999, the nonprofit Home and School Institute, sponsor of MegaSkills, will assemble on its web site a select list of acclaimed books identified by teachers and librarians nationally. These books will cover the early elementary grades through middle/upper elementary years.

This is the first time this list has been assembled for public use. In this list are age-old classics and books published within the last few years. The number and variety of books available for children today can be overwhelming. That is why the Institute is providing this service.

MegaSkills® formulated by Dr. Dorothy Rich, are the habits, the behaviors, and attitudes vital for achievement. *Confidence, Effort, Motivation, Responsibility, Common Sense, Teamwork, Caring, Initiative, Perseverance, Problem Solving and Focus.* These are the "inner engines of learning."

With thirty years of research and experience, the nonprofit Home and School Institute, sponsor of www.MegaSkillsHSI.org provides services for schools and homes across the nation. Over 3000 schools use the MegaSkills Workshop Program with documented success in higher test scores and decreased discipline incidents. Contact www.MegaSkillsHSI.org for more information.

tions than start up schools.

Many parents, in fact, talk about alternatives to the public schools without really knowing what is involved, what benefits they may realistically expect, what pitfalls they may face. We need to provide them with information and leadership. One relatively easy way to do this is to clip, save, and distribute all relevant articles and studies on alternative forms of education. Giving parents all the facts, and not just about the school trying to keep them, can be very persuasive.

When businesses woo customers, they assess their products and services and take steps to make them stronger; schools can do even better. Here are examples of the kinds of questions school personnel need to ask themselves. Call it a personal school report card:

- Do we know what our customers want? Do we care?
- Are we ready to provide the kind of service and outreach it takes to woo and win our customers?
- Do we have ways (such as surveys) to find out what our customers care about? Do we do this regularly?
- Do we have a written statement of services and written materials soliciting parent comments?
- Do we make strong efforts to inform our customers about issues in education and the pros and cons of various initiatives?
- Do we give our customers the benefit of our expertise? When we buy cars or cosmetics, there are consumer reports to check. Whom do parents ask about schooling issues?
- Do we have front-line personnel trained and assigned to respond effectively to parent questions? This includes administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and front-office support staff.
- What staff training needs to be provided? What parent training?
- Do employees in all facets of the school's work know how to put across the school's philosophy? Do they know and believe in the basic message and the pluses of our school?
- Do we have a way to determine

how well the message is getting through and the effectiveness of our service system? When parents say they are moving their children from our school, is there a sign-out process that helps determine why they are making this change?

• How do I rank the overall service provided at the school where I teach? At the school where my children are enrolled? At the school I wish they could attend? What changes would I make to ensure that my school received more positive answers on this questionnaire?

Just as in the business world, there will always be the unappeasable, unpersuadable school client who can never be satisfied. But when educators get more Yes answers than No's and Not Sure's on this modest survey, they will be well on the way to competing effectively for their parents and students. ■

Dorothy Rich is the founder and president of the nonprofit Home and School Institute in Washington. She is the author of MegaSkills and the developer of the MegaSkills teacher-training program.

This article appeared in the commentary section of Education Week. Reprinted with permission from Education Week, Vol. XVIII, Number 36, May 19, 1999.

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Dr. Dorothy Rich

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The Home and School Institute (HSI), a nonprofit educational organization, since 1972, provides tested solutions for problems that face education today and determine adults' and children's lives for tomorrow.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FALL 1999

New Training Initiative Announced for DC Teen Parents MegaSkills® Connection for Family and Work

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Home and School Institute (HSI) and For Love of Children (FLOC) announce the launch on Saturday, October 16, 1999 of MegaSkills training for teen parents and for school and social service agency personnel serving teen parents.

The initiative, MegaSkills Connection for Family and Work, prepares teen parents to develop habits, attitudes and behaviors necessary for success as a parent and as a employee. The program is funded through an Even Start grant.

Career MegaSkills is an interactive learning system that focuses on behaviors that lead to developing and sustaining personal habits needed for continuing education and enhanced job performance. This training initiative also teaches strategies and techniques for increased parenting skills necessary for positive child development.

(MORE)

The MegaSkills to be taught are: *Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving and Focus.*

Under this initiative, the Home and School will also provide professional training, MegaSkills Leader Training for Parent Involvement, to DC social service agency personnel and DC teachers to enable them to conduct MegaSkills Parent Workshops on a continuing basis at their own agencies and schools.

The teen parent program will take place at Children's Hospital and the Family Place. It is led by Janice Melvin and Phyllis Kemp, MegaSkills leaders who have used the program in the District of Columbia Public Schools.

The related professional development training, MegaSkills Leader Training for Parent Involvement to take place at Scott Montgomery School, is led by Harriett Stonehill, Director of the MegaSkills Education Program nationally.

The work of the nonprofit Home and School Institute (HSI), with its MegaSkills Education Center, is to build achievement and literacy in school and beyond. HSI, founded by Dr. Dorothy Rich, beginning in 1964, has developed systematic trainings and materials for total community educational involvement with specific focus on needs of at-risk students.

The Institute designs and provides training for educators and community leaders working with children and adults to build success through academics, literacy, and character building activities that teach the habits and attitudes it takes to achieve. The tested MegaSkills Programs, have involved more than 110,000 families and has trained over 10,000 MegaSkills Leaders.

The work of HSI has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Reader's Digest, NBC Today, and in numerous professional publications.

For additional information, visit **www.MegaSkillsHSI.org**



MEGASKILLS® EDUCATION CENTER
of
The Home and School Institute, Inc.

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Washington, DC 20005
Tel: (202) 466-3633
Fax: (202) 833-1400
www.MegaSkillsHSI.org

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WNS Group

Edward Zigler
Sterling Professor of Psychology
Yale University

●
Harriet Stonehill
Director
MegaSkills Education Center

**WHAT MEGASKILLS AND THE HOME AND
SCHOOL INSTITUTE ARE ALL ABOUT ...
AND CAN DO FOR YOU ...**

Comprehensive Reform for True Learning

The nonprofit Home and School Institute designs and provides training and materials to build successful learning and achievement for children and adults in school and beyond. After years of testing, these are now available to teachers, parents, employers and the wider community.

The unique and special focus of the Institute, founded by Dr. Dorothy Rich, is **MegaSkills**. These are the habits, the behaviors, and attitudes vital for achievement. They are the inner engines of learning.

This Institute offers award-winning MegaSkills training programs and publications nationally and internationally. Evidence from these programs in over 3,000 schools ... indicates higher test scores, increased self-discipline for students and improved abilities of teachers and parents to become involved and successful.

With thirty years of research and experience, the Institute delivers education for the information age. MegaSkills focus on the needs of adults and children as learners in school, in the workplace, in life.

Building the "Inner Engines of Learning" for Success in School and Beyond

The Home and School Institute, Inc. is a nonprofit, Section 501(c)(3) organization.

e-mail: HSIDRA@erols.com



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Harriett Stonehill
Director
MegaSkills Education Center

Fact Sheet: About HSI/MegaSkills Education Center

Mission: The major focus of the work of the nonprofit Home and School Institute (HSI) and its MegaSkills® Education Center, is to help families and educators build children's achievement in school and beyond. Since 1972, HSI has worked with school districts, federal, state and local government agencies, businesses and community organizations. Family literacy and the needs of at-risk students are fundamental Institute concerns.

Programs/Publications: *MegaSkills* are the habits, attitudes and behaviors that determine achievement. They include Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving and Focus. The Institute's programs provide a unique and proven approach to teaching these skills.

- ★ **MegaSkills Leader Training Seminars** train instructors to conduct workshops for families to help children develop **MegaSkills**.
- ★ **MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom** provides training for teachers to teach MegaSkills directly to children in the classroom.
- ★ **The New MegaSkills Bond** builds school and family/ community partnerships.
- ★ **MegaSkills Schools** combine all of the trainings in an achievement process for school wide programs.

Conducted in 48 states, MegaSkills Workshops now are used in over 3000 schools and have reached over 100,000 families and their children. MegaSkills is recognized as the major training program focusing on the educational role of the family. Families served by HSI programs include African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American. Support for MegaSkills Programs has come from Kraft Foods, MacArthur Foundation, The Sears-Roebuck Foundation, and IBM. The program is a model in New Directions for Parent Involvement. The workshops are based on the highly acclaimed book, *MegaSkills*, by Dr. Dorothy Rich, HSI President. Related specially developed publications are also available from HSI.

Evaluation: *Memphis State University and University of Louisville researchers reported TV watching for children decreased with increased time on homework. Texas Educational Agency research indicates that students at the MegaSkills School in Weslaco showed higher scores on achievement tests with fewer discipline problems. The MegaSkills Program has received the A+ Award from the US Department of Education and the Golden Apple Award.*

MegaSkills books have received Parents' Choice Awards.

The work of HSI, has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, Reader's Digest, NBC Today, Good Morning America and numerous professional education publications. With over 20 years of experience, the Institute provides coordinated, tested programs for educational progress.

Building the "Inner Engines of Learning" for Success in School and Beyond

The Home and School Institute, Inc. is a nonprofit, Section 501(c)(3) organization.

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Spring 1999

**The Lessons of Littleton
What It Really Takes to Develop Successful Students and Citizens**

A Lesson from Dr. Dorothy Rich

The message from Littleton, Colorado is loud and clear: Along with academic achievement, students need the attitudes and behaviors of mind and heart that enable them to be productive and successful in school and beyond.

That is what MegaSkills Programs uniquely provide. The MegaSkills Programs have documented stronger literacy, higher test scores along with sharp decreases in discipline incidents. Compensatory Education Funds support these programs.

The MegaSkills Process combines academic and emotional development. MegaSkills are the basics for successful learning and living: **Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving and Focus.** MegaSkills enables teachers and families today to teach the essential values of education, the pleasure of hard work, the delight in accomplishment, and the joys of working together.

I could sit in my office and write reports and hope for the best. But, I know—and **you** know—that this is not enough. That's why the Home and School Institute works with you directly in your schools. That's why we offer training programs on site, with and for your teachers and parents.

Enclosed are brief materials. You will want these MegaSkills trainings. You will want these materials. They work. They will work for you and your students, your staff, and your families. Check our new, redesigned web page for more details (www.MegaSkillsHSI.org). You will want to know that the newest dimension in our work for secondary school, plus vocational and adult education is *Career MegaSkills*, available later this month.

Harriett Stonehill, Director of the MegaSkills Education Center, is ready to answer your questions, inform you about where you can see the programs in action, and set training dates with you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Executive Summary

Impact of the MegaSkills® Program for Students, Teachers, Parents School-Wide at A.N. (Tony) Rico Elementary Weslaco, Texas (1997-1999)

This report documents the implementation and impact of the MegaSkills program, the school-wide influences that contributed to program success, and the outcomes achieved for students, teachers and parents. The MegaSkills program offered Rico's constituencies an opportunity for renewal by using new approaches, methods and materials to help students achieve academically, develop life competencies, and to acquire positive social abilities.

The Rico Elementary School in rural south Texas, with the leadership of principal, Velda Correa, adopted the MegaSkills programs as part of its comprehensive school reform effort with funding from the Texas Education Agency. In 1997-98 the MegaSkills Essentials in the Classroom Program and the MegaSkills Parent Workshop Program were implemented as the first stage of a two-year initiative for developing a school-wide focus on the MegaSkills.

The eleven MegaSkills "the inner engines of learning," include Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Perseverance, Caring, Initiative, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Common Sense, and Focus. They are the attributes needed for success in both school and the workplace.

Impact of the MegaSkills Program for Students

- **Children's Achievement and Test Results Improved**
- **Interest in Learning Was Raised**
- **Understanding and Behavior Changed**

Gains were reported for the year on standardized tests of academic achievement:

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Percent Passing

	1996-97	1997-98
<i>Third Grade</i>		
Reading	69%	91%
Math	75%	95%
<i>Fourth Grade</i>		
Reading	94%	95%
Math	91%	97%
Writing	83%	96%

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the Texas Education Agency under the area of Staff Development and Parent Training for Campus Deregulation and Restructuring for improvement of Student Achievement.

The gains for the third grade, which was the focus of special program efforts, are dramatic. The fourth grade scores were considerably higher in the previous year; nevertheless, positive gains were made even at these high passing levels.

Comparing these scores with two other district schools with similar student demographics indicates that Rico's passing rates are as much as 21 percent higher for Hispanic students overall, and 19 percent higher for the economically disadvantaged student group.

Data from an end-of-year staff survey indicate the interest and commitment of students to the program and the pronounced effects of the program on student learning and behavior that staff observed. High percentages of staff responded positively to the following items:

Students enjoyed and derived benefits from the MegaSkills curriculum	97%
Students were able to identify MegaSkills in stories and/or in the behaviors of self/others.	94%
Students showed considerable/some change in demonstrating responsibility and teamwork.	100%
Students showed considerable/some change in attitudes and behaviors.	91%

Student progress is closely monitored at Rico. Therefore, staff and administration noted positive change early on in children's achievement and behavior. Just three months after the MegaSkills training teachers (82%) reported positive change in student behaviors. They indicated students were more responsible about completing assignments, more interested in school work, more adept at working cooperatively, more able to concentrate and pay attention, and demonstrated more respect for others.

These positive changes and gains were maintained throughout the year. Teachers, who had two-thirds of their students failing after the first marking period, had reduced that number to no more than five students with problems in May. Teachers at various grade levels reported that some students who had begun the year at very low achievement levels were performing better than others who began at higher levels by the end of the year. These improvements in academic and social skills resulted in fewer failing students. In a school population of over 600 with many limited English proficient and low socio-economic status students, only 27 were referred for summer school, a rate of less than 5%.

A variety of data indicates the more positive attitudes demonstrated by students, many of whom had a history of frustration and academic failure at school. Eight students were on behavioral contracts at the beginning of the 1997 school year, but none by May, 1998. Parents also reported seeing beneficial changes in their children's attitudes and behaviors.

Impact of the MegaSkills Program for Teachers

- **Increased Effectiveness in the Classroom**
- **Higher Morale Among Staff Members**
- **Professional Growth for Staff**

Teachers associated improved classroom management, more structure, better discipline, and increased student respect with using the MegaSkills Program in their classrooms.

The principal identified exceptional motivation among staff members over the year to do something different, to have fewer children below grade level. She commented *"I have used a lot of programs. MegaSkills is different. It helped us live together at a different level and has taken us to a unique stage of humanness---MegaSkills connected the heart and the head."*

Impact of the MegaSkills Program for Parents

- **Parent Behavior Changed**
- **Parents Learned to Help Their Children Succeed in School.**
- **Parents Felt More Positive About the School**

Eight MegaSkills workshops were offered to Even Start parents in both Spanish and English. Attendance averaged 24 per session. Parents reported these positive changes in their own behaviors:

Doing more reading with the child (ren)	100%
Limiting the amount of TV the children are watching	100%
Doing more checking to see that homework is completed.	92%

Parents described the following changes in their children's attitudes and behavior:

More willing to do homework	100%
More eager to go to school each day	92%
More often prepared for school	88%

In addition, parents identified a positive change in their feelings toward the school.

Impact of the MegaSkills Program School-Wide

- **Success Expectations Were Heightened**
- **Discipline Improved**
- **Specialists, Resource Personnel and Classroom Teachers Developed Partnerships**

Implementation of the MegaSkills Program became the major objective of the school. By creating a continuous program focus on the MegaSkills, a school-wide environment of success was supported. The principal initiated the MegaSkills program and monitored implementation closely. MegaSkills were included in the classroom observation checklists, expected in teachers' lesson plans, reinforced with teachers after frequent classroom walk-throughs, and thus became pervasive throughout the school.

Staff conducted multiple activities to insure the success of the program. Specialists in music, physical and special education, computers/technology, counseling and the library/media taught the MegaSkills and provided additional support to the classroom program.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The principal and staff were ready to take action to meet the needs of students and to decrease the number of behavioral and academic low-achievers. The MegaSkills program was selected as the vehicle for school reform because of earlier success other schools in the district had in using components of the program.

The MegaSkills program engaged both the minds and hearts of Rico's students, staff, and parents, and created feelings of improvement and success throughout the school. Participation in the program had a positive influence on teachers' classroom management and instructional decisions as they addressed student learning and behavioral issues. Students and parents shared the beneficial impact the MegaSkills had on themselves and their families. As a result, school improvement in Year One was multifaceted and broad-based.

With a change in principals, (Rico is now headed by Yolanda Hernandez), Year Two of MegaSkills is set to begin February 1999. Program implementation will focus on expanding attempts to reach all parents, and increasing documentation of program impact on individual students, parents, and staff. With a new principal and staff, additional training is needed in the use of the MegaSkills Parent Workshop and Essentials for the Classroom programs. Introducing the new MegaSkill Focus, and providing support staff (bus drivers, office staff, cafeteria workers, custodians, etc.) with increased opportunities to be part of the program is planned. Program implementation in Year Two will continue to expand and maintain Rico Elementary as a fully operational MegaSkills School, and to offer demonstration/outreach to other schools in Texas and beyond in the use of MegaSkills.

**Beverly A. Mattox
January 1999**

For Further Information Contact:

***MegaSkills Education Center of the Home and School Institute
1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW Washington, DC 20005
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UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

Maupin MegaSkills® School-Wide Program (Spring 1996) Final Evaluation/Executive Summary

Profile of the Maupin School

Maupin School is an inner-city elementary school with an enrollment of approximately 450 students. The immediate neighborhood is 99% African-American, with large numbers of families living at or near the poverty line. As a magnet school, Maupin draws students from across the school system to achieve greater racial balance. Eighty percent (80%) of the total school enrollment qualify for free or reduced lunch.

MegaSkills School-Wide provides complementary roles for all school staff and parents so that the MegaSkills are consistently taught and reinforced in the classroom, the home, and throughout the school. In addition the school chooses school improvement areas, such as discipline or attendance, upon which the MegaSkills programs can be expected to have impact, and develops strategies and activities to build these special achievement areas.

Program Impact: Key Findings

Students Data provided consistent findings of positive changes in student attitudes and behaviors:

- High percentage of teachers indicated that students had developed more positive behaviors and attitudes in a number of areas:

More respectful and considerate of others (92%)

More able to work cooperatively (93%)

Fewer discipline problems (93%)

More responsible (93%)

More confident and self-reliant (86%)

More interest in school (86%)

- Parents reported similar changes in their children's behaviors.
- Student self-report data from pre-test to post-test indicated growth in self-awareness and the ability to be self-critical in assessing their own behavior.

School: The data indicate that the program had school-wide effects:

- There was strong agreement among school staff (90% of the teachers and 100% of the parent workshop leaders) that the program had improved school climate.
- The program contributed to raising the expectations of student behavior at the school over the two year pilot period and staff reported improved discipline.
- The program helped to increase the involvement of parents in school activities and attendance at parent-teacher conferences.
- The program provided a common language about student attitudes and behaviors which facilitated understanding and communication among teachers, parents, students, and support staff.
- The common language and complementary roles for school staff and parents helped to develop a greater sense of community within the school.

Parents: Workshop leaders reported the following parent changes as a result of workshop participation:

- Better understanding of what their children do in school
- More willing and able to discuss with teachers how to treat their children
- More able to deal with their children's problems and monitor their activities
- More confident of their own abilities and strengths
- More supportive of each other
- More involved with school activities

Parents reported similar behaviors:

- Ability to relate and communicate to their children better
- Talking about school with their children
- Realizing that school can be stressful and being supportive of their children
- Importance of communicating with other parents and finding how much they have in common

The program has become institutionalized at the Maupin School over the two year period and is continuing without the support of external funding.

Prepared by: **Denzil Edge, Ph.D.** Professor, School of Education, University of Louisville

For a Longer Report on MegaSkills at Maupin and For More Information:

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CARSON FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
340 West 224th Street
Carson, California 90745
310-513-8070 Phone 310-513-6766 Fax

CARSON MEGASKILLS PROGRAM
REPORT ON THE 1996-1997 ACADEMIC YEAR

Serving the Carson Complex of Schools
Los Angeles Unified School District

Ambler Avenue

Annalee Avenue

Bonita Street

Broadacres Avenue

*Caroldale LEARNing
Community*

Carson Street

Catskill Avenue

Del Amo

Dolores Street

Dominguez

Leapwood Avenue

Towne Avenue

232nd Place

Carnegie Middle School

Curtiss Middle School

White Middle School

Carson High School

Eagle Tree High School

For the 1996-97 school year Kraft General Foods, Inc., funded a parent education program, MegaSkills®, for three school sites in the City of Carson. MegaSkills is a nationally-renowned curriculum which has been used in hundreds of schools. In addition to the impact that the program has made on individual parents through the workshops themselves, we have also used this grant to support systemic change. This is a final report on both those aspects of the first year of the Carson MegaSkills program.

I. *Impact on Families*

The Spanish-language class was an extraordinary success. Attendance averaged 25; some individual workshops drew 32 participants. In the MegaSkills class, parents had an opportunity to discuss their own childhood experiences and compare and contrast them with those of their own children. For many parents, this was the first time that they were talking about their lives in this way. The classes were not just about parenting; they also served as a new way to connect to the community and to each other. La Opinión, the Spanish language newspaper, visited the group at Dolores Street School and wrote an article on our MegaSkills classes. One of our staff was also a guest on the interview program "Hola L.A." on Channel 32 (Telemundo), where she spoke about the MegaSkills program.

At the end of this first year of funding, over 200 parents in Carson and Wilmington have attended at least one MegaSkills workshop. More than 100 parents have been awarded a MegaSkills certificate for attending a minimum of three workshops. Of those, some 75 came to celebrate at our MegaSkills celebration, where we honored the parents and the people of the community who made Carson MegaSkills Program a reality.

II. *Impact on the System*

When we instituted the MegaSkills program, we saw an opportunity to use this curriculum as a framework for our outreach into the community. By shifting the training to our facility, we had sufficient funds from the Kraft grant to cover the training of ten people, so we began to conceptualize the program in a different way. We started to think about the straightforward language of MegaSkills as well-suited for

communicating clearly with parents about what skills they and the schools need to encourage in our children. We saw that a common vocabulary would be a good starting place for stimulating the kinds of energetic discussion that could lead to change within the schools. We began looking at our MegaSkills program as context rather than content.

- With trained personnel at every school, we created a built-in network for outreaching to parents in every school. We used that network to get out information about the numerous other kinds of activities that we or our collaborative partners sponsor. We see a much wider response to our programs and the MegaSkills connection is the key. For example, the attendance at our latest Resource Coordinating Council Town Hall meeting was almost double the previous meeting. Parents from almost every school in the Carson complex were represented.
- Outreach to parents for other services (e.g. case management, Carson Child Guidance, immunizations, etc.) has used the MegaSkills network as a communication channel, with important success in case-finding and publicizing available services.
- Our greatest visible impact has been on the Latino communities of Carson and Wilmington. The consistently high attendance at the Dolores Street School workshops has been duplicated by the efforts of one of our parent-facilitators at Hawaiian Avenue School in Wilmington. Parents are grateful for the support network created through MegaSkills, and for the supplementary materials on subjects such as nonviolent discipline, which the Carson Family Resource Center supplied through the MegaSkills facilitators. The workshop have been crucial in strengthening the bonds of the parents to the school, thereby supporting the goal of increased parent involvement.
- Because of the interactive format of the MegaSkills workshops, a great deal of informal information is exchanged among the parents and the facilitator. Parents are finding out about services and programs in other schools and are taking on responsibility for initiating those programs in their home school. Again, this supports the goal of increased parent involvement, as well as developing leadership capacity within individual schools. Weekly encounters with parents from other schools enhance the constructive conversation of parents about what they can actually do to make a difference in their children's education.
- Parents who were in MegaSkills workshops are now serving on various Task Forces of our Resource Coordinating Council; two are currently employed as Community Reps for the Carson Family Resource Center. Again, the nature of the program encourages a connectedness with the schools and the community. When parents experience acceptance and encouragement, they are more willing and feel more able to give back.

The experience of MegaSkills has been a rich one for staff, parents and community.

For a longer report on the Carson MegaSkills Program, contact the Home and School Institute, MegaSkills Education Center, 1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW Washington, DC 20005 (202) 466-3633 www.MegaSkillsHSI.org

7. **Complete Training and Materials On-Site** - MegaSkills programs are conducted on site for individual schools or district wide. All the materials needed for each program are provided including reproducible materials for families and evaluations for the program.
8. **MegaSkills Leader Training for Parents Workshops** - Provides a complete program of 11 workshops for leaders to present to families. The workshops initiate positive change for families; families learn new ways to support the education of their children at home and become more involved in school activities.
9. **MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom** - Keyed to student academic and character building learning objectives. It helps develop strong study skills and good work habits. It enables students to build self-discipline in coping with pressures and builds a strong value system. MegaSkills are integrated with academics - reading, language arts, science, math and critical thinking.
10. **New MegaSkills Bond** - Translates national education goals and mandates into practical action for educators and parent leaders working together, coordinating community resources for new partnerships and designing action plans for parent/community involvement. It builds professional growth for teachers/leaders and is ideal for school based management and school improvement plans.
11. **New Dimensions in MegaSkills Programs to Ever-Evolving Public Needs.** Among these new programs: *Career MegaSkills: Learning Habits, Attitudes and Behaviors for Doing Well in School and on the Job. Finding Success in Transitioning Students from School to the Workplace;* *Nurturing the Educational Leader Within You: Building Personal and Professional Effectiveness Using MegaSkills.*
12. **Ongoing Technical Assistance from HSI** - The MegaSkills Center provides technical assistance through feedback, phone calls, e-mail, and web site (www.MegaSkillsHSI.org.) Communications and networking are strongly supported nationally. Parent workshop leaders participate in the HSI certification process.
13. **Funding for MegaSkills Programs** - Compensatory Education Funds including Title I, II, Drug and Dropout Prevention, Vocational Education, Head Start, Even Start, Special Education, Bilingual Education, Migrant Education, and Staff Development are among funds used to pay for these MegaSkills training programs. Business is increasingly interested in supporting these programs. Contact HSI for materials to help you include MegaSkills training your proposal.

MegaSkills Programs are tested, effective and ready for your use immediately. Check the Home and School Institute web page for more details (www.MegaSkillsHSI.org) or call/write us today.

**MEGASKILLS® PROGRAM Summary of End of Year Survey
for Principals and Teachers in Continuing Programs (June 1998)**

- 100% of respondents indicate that their students derive benefits from the MegaSkills curriculum.
- 100% of respondents indicate parents derive benefits from the MegaSkills workshops.
- More than 90% indicate considerable or some increase in use of MegaSkills resulting in positive “student changes in attitudes and behaviors.”
- More than 70% indicate they can think of specific children who have benefited from the program.

Survey respondents indicated “considerable and some change in attitudes and behaviors” in specific MegaSkills for participants in the MegaSkills Parent Workshop Program and the MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom:

<i>Confidence</i>	90% +	<i>Perseverance</i>	80% +
<i>Motivation</i>	90% +	<i>Caring</i>	85% +
<i>Effort</i>	90% +	<i>Teamwork</i>	90% +
<i>Responsibility</i>	95% +	<i>Common Sense</i>	90% +
<i>Initiative</i>	85% +	<i>Problem Solving</i>	85% +

Overall, what have been positive aspects of using MegaSkills with students and with parents?

- Parents began to talk about the need to talk to their children and spend time with them. They began to share how they put off other things and turned off the TV.
Mary Shaefer, Carmichael, CA
- The student shows more confidence and in turn is showing more effort and initiative.
Carol McFarland, Johnson Elementary, Barberton, OH
- Increased confidence and responsibility in parents. Parents spending more time with their children.
Karen Shawver, Region XVI E.S.C, Amarillo, TX
- I’ve always had a great response to my workshops and parents seemed to enjoy them.
Lanny Bertholf, Bonner Elementary, Daytona Beach, FL
- Parents became more involved and aware of methods they can use to work with their children at home. *Kay Pennington, Caledonia Middle, Caldonia, MS*
- Students feel more confident in learning skills. *Victoria Cooper, Holly Hill Elem., Holly Hill, FL*

- Students are more willing and confident in speaking. They are developing better class skills.
Rachele A. Ackerman, Jackson Avenue Elementary School, Hackensack, NJ
- Parents want to keep the program going. Some are interested in being trained as workshop leaders.
Sandra Donovan, Hollingsworth East, Eaton, OH
- Mutual understanding of the importance of school. *Pauline Carriere, Holyoke Public Schools, Holyoke, MA*
- We have had increased parent involvement. *Kathy McNelley, Westside Elem., Daytona Beach, FL*
- Parents seemed to really go away with ideas on how to put MegaSkills into their family to benefit their children. *Mary Ellen Rain, Lebanon City Schools, Lebanon, OH*
- Parents who participate in MegaSkills Program demonstrate greater achievement in confidence and responsibility. They feel empowered and a vital link in the education of children.
Robin Dix, Milburn T. Maupin School, Louisville, KY

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These results of these surveys represent states across the country and include AK, CA, FL, KY, MA, MN, MS, NJ, OH, PA. The findings clearly indicate strong benefits to both parents and students in increasing their MegaSkills for continuing achievement.

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MegaSkills Training Overview

Take Action Today!

- Read about MegaSkills,
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Tested Results from MegaSkills® Programs

- Higher achievement
- Higher attendance rates
- Fewer school discipline problems
- Increased participation by families in education

Training for educators and community leaders working with children and adults to build success through academics, literacy, and character building activities that teach the habits and attitudes it takes to achieve.

The MegaSkills

Confidence

Motivation

Effort

Responsibility

Initiative

Perseverance

Caring

Teamwork

Common Sense

Problem Solving

Focus

See new HSI Website for more details.
www.MegaSkillsHSI.org

What MegaSkills® and The Home and School Institute Are All About ... And Can Do For You ...

Comprehensive Reform for True Student Learning

The work of the nonprofit Home and School Institute (HSI), with its MegaSkills Education Center, is to build achievement and literacy in school and beyond.

HSI, founded by Dr. Dorothy Rich, beginning in 1964, has developed systematic trainings and materials for total community educational involvement with specific focus on needs of at-risk students.

The tested MegaSkills Programs, led by Harriett Stonehill, has involved more than 110,000 families and has trained over 10,000 MegaSkills Leaders.

HSI works with school districts, federal, state and local government agencies, corporations and community organizations. See list of partner organizations inside.

The work of HSI has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Reader's Digest, NBC Today, and in numerous professional publications.

Five Award Winning Trainings

Researched and Tested Culturally Diverse Successfully used by 3000 schools in 48 states

★ **Leader Training for Family Educational Involvement**
 The MegaSkills® Method

★ **Building Student Academic Achievement**
 The MegaSkills® Classroom Method

★ **Nurturing the Educational Leader Within You**
 Building Personal & Professional Effectiveness Using MegaSkills®

★ **Succeeding With Parent/Community Partnerships**
 The MegaSkills® Way

★ **Career MegaSkills®**
 Learning Habits, Attitudes and Behaviors for Doing Well in School and on the Job

All materials to conduct the programs are available in Spanish.