3. appreciation of, knowledge of, or skills in many aspects of different cultures.

For parents who did not feel they had special interests or talents but who were willing to assist in any way they could, "helping out" became a fourth category.

Invitation and Orientation
To initiate "Par-aide in Education," we sent a letter to all parents of children in the school (see "Sample Letter to Parents," p. 39). We invited those who responded to a two-hour inservice session, where they were given information about and training in how to plan and conduct their presentations.

In each category (occupation, hobby or craft, culture), teachers modeled demonstration lessons with lab school students so "Par-aiders" could see how their instruction might (not must) look in practice (see "Sample Format of Presentation," p. 40). The content of these lessons, which lasted from 15 to 40 minutes, ranged from Jewish religious holidays, Egyptian art, sailing, baking bread, and origami to "how it feels and what you do" when you're an architect, a pharmacist, a secretary, and a salesperson (see "Suggested Content for Your Presentation," p. 36). We encouraged the "Par-aiders" to modify the basic lesson plan to accommodate their own content and styles.

The parents also watched teachers illustrate techniques for making lessons more successful, such as letting students know at the beginning to overlook the knowledge and skills that parents alone possess shortchanges students.

Enlisting Parents' Help with Mathematics
Ann P. Kahn

- "Math is not a part of everyday life unless you plan to be a scientist."
- "Boys are naturally better at math than girls."
- "Learning math requires special abilities, which most students don't have."

For years, many parents have believed and repeated such math myths. But mathematics skills are not genetic. Like any other subject, mathematics requires hard work and high expectations.

Without math, citizens cannot understand newspaper articles about the impact of political polls, AIDS testing, or acid rain. A consumer can't tell whether the "jumbo" or the "Giant" size of detergent is the best buy. The loan interest on a charge account or a home mortgage is a mystery. And so on. Starting early in elementary school, our children need to know the full range of mathematics skills, not just arithmetic. If we allow our children to be limited to computation, their job prospects are dim—they can be replaced by a cheap machine.

Enter a new national PTA kit, Math Matters: Kids Are Counting on You, based on the premise that all parents, whether they loved math or hated it, can make a difference in their children's education. The kit's developers recognize that mathematics is the subject that most parents feel least comfortable with. To help them, Math Matters provides ideas parents can use with their children at their own kitchen tables or on family outings. Periodically during the year, PTAs will send their member parents selections from over 70 "Home Helpers." For example, suggested home activities, which come with instructions, include:

- doubling a recipe for oatmeal cookies and using the fractional measurements in baking;
- taking a family survey on favorite ice cream flavors and showing the results on a bar graph;
- filling in football "stat" charts or figuring the batting averages for favorite baseball players;
- estimating the total bill during trips to the grocery store (learning to "round up" prices to make the task easier).

Many such activities can be performed with a calculator, and the kit contains one designed for 4th grade fingers. The kit also contains a list of ideas for gifts that develop interest in mathematics and science, summer and vacation tips to help children keep the skills they learned during the school year, and a special sheet to help preschoolers learn concepts like larger than or smaller than. Additionally, there are posters, a seven-minute videotape, math stickers, and a "Quiz for Parents," which reveals how many myths they believe about mathematics.

Neither schools nor parents alone can turn around the problems caused by math illiteracy. But the PTA believes they have a much better chance, working together. When parents believe that "Math Matters" and that their kids are depending on them, they can become part of the team seeking a solution.
