INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Order Number 9212989

A study of parent-teacher communications

Rohwer, Keith Allen, Ed.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1991

A STUDY OF PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS

by

Keith A. Rohwer

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor L. James Walter
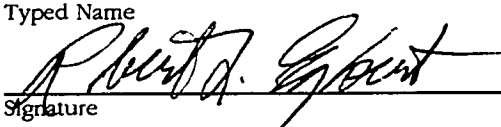
Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1991
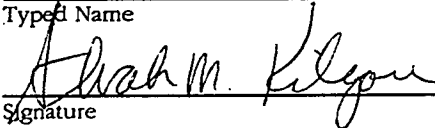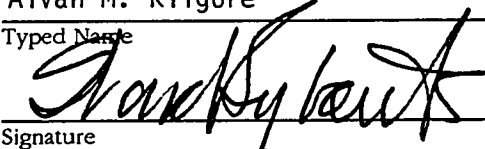
DISSERTATION TITLE

A STUDY OF PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNCATIONS

BY

Keith A. Rohwer

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

APPROVED	DATE
(signature)	12/2/91
Signature	
L. James Walter	
Typed Name	
(signature)	12/2/91
Signature	
Robert Egbert	
Typed Name	
(signature)	12/2/91
Signature	
Alvah M. Kilgore	
Typed Name	
(signature)	12/2/91
Signature	
Ward Sybouts	
Typed Name	
Signature	
Typed Name	
Signature	
Typed Name	

GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

A STUDY OF PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS

Keith A. Rohwer, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 1991

Advisor: L. James Walter

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical model
that described teacher thoughts and decision-making processes that
occurred while the teacher was planning for the parent-teacher
conference as well as conducting conferences.

The populations used in this study included elementary
teachers in a Class III Nebraska school district and the parents
of children who attended the elementary schools in this school
district. Raw data were collected from individual project teachers'
conference tapes and the parent and teacher questionnaires dealing
with the effectiveness of teacher communication during conferences.
The researcher then conducted individual interviews with the project
teachers, who responded to questions about the identified incidents
on each conference tape.

The data collected in this research project revealed the
twelve characteristics identified to be part of the Parent-
Conferencing Communication Model are integral components of a
successful parent-teacher conference. The characteristics existed
and could be identified in each of the case studies. The data
revealed that the specific area of questioning on the part of the
teacher regarding decision making was a little-used principle
during the parent-teacher conference. The data also revealed that

the teachers in the study did not make good use of the follow-up characteristics in the model. The teachers planned the conference, shared and explained observations and ideas, and discussed concerns and areas that needed improvement; however, the teachers somehow fell short of making plans for improvement at the end of the conference.

Staff development guidelines were developed directly from the Parent-Conferencing Communication Model in an effort to assist teachers in improving their conferencing skills. This staff development approach closely resembled the approach used when focusing on the improvement of instruction. The technique will be incorporated into inservice sessions prior to and following scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My parents, Arnold and Martha Rohwer, who made the dream of
a college education a reality, who always wanted more for their sons
than they ever had, who showed us what a work ethic is all about, and
who continue to be a strong support system for us all.

My children, Andrew and Elizabeth, who were my constant
companions as I worked through the research, the writing, and the
finished product. I love them very much.

My wife and best friend, Barbara, who was ALWAYS there to
listen, to offer encouragement, to pray for strength, and to accept
the long days, extra hours, and commitment to this project.

Barbara, Andrew, and Elizabeth--I dedicate this study to you!

K.A.R.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

Parent-teacher conferences are a widely used means of communicating with parents. In this face-to-face exchange, information and ideas about the child are shared, insight is gained, attitudes are exchanged, and plans for furthering the student's best development are evolved. From preschool to high school, skillfully conducted conferences with parents have been enlightening to parents and teachers and beneficial to children and adolescents. They are part of the modern teacher's responsibility. According to researchers, children enter school with very different skills and learning styles. The sources of these differences can be traced to environmental, behavioral, and genetic factors. The fact that 80 percent of the children who enter school can learn the same amount of material at the same level of difficulty (Bloom, 1976) may at first appear to contradict the above assumptions. With study, however, when these differences are taken into account in the teaching process, "equal educational outcomes" can and do occur. Despite the notion of equity, the obvious contributions of environment, learning behavior, and genetics, and the influence of teachers, perhaps the most influential factor in the learning process is the home environment (Swick, 1981). Teacher-parent cooperation has been demonsrated to be an effective

means of maximizing learning. When teachers and parents view the educational process as a collaborative effort, the parent-teacher conference becomes a key strategy that will enhance the child's growth and promote more effective learning (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987).

The classroom teacher is faced with the responsibility of orchestrating the actual parent-teacher conference meeting. The teachers' planning for the conference, the decisions they make regarding the conference topics, both before and during the conference, and the effective use of communication skills all help determine the success of that conference.

The communication process is the core of the parent conference. Communication may be verbal and nonverbal. Words, understood by both parent and teacher, convey thoughts, ideas, and insights. A smile, a nod, and a bodily attitude of paying close attention convey interest, concern, and approval. Communication is the basic purpose of parent-teacher conferences.

Underlying the communication process are mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation. The teacher understands some of the parents' problems in bringing up children. The parent realizes the teacher's difficulties in meeting the needs of thirty or more children, each one different in ability and personality (Bailard & Strong, 1964).

Developing confidence is a task parallel to establishing trust. Trust is a very valuable commodity, yet it can be shattered by a single ill-conceived act. Confidence must be experienced by both

the teacher and the parent as they experience the interactions that occur during the conference.

There should be no need to justify why parents and educators must collaborate in the education of children. However, there remains a significant number of parents who automatically defer to the "authority" of teachers because the teacher is a "professional educator." Such a descriptor is spoken as though it signals infallibility. Concurrently, there is a sufficient number of educators who sincerely believe in the myth that they can do no wrong. Such educators are not uncaring and patronizing educators; however, while welcoming parents' interest and support, they resent parents who intrude on their "authority" or question either their judgment or competence. Such teachers are likely to assert that parents should care for the child's needs out of school and teachers should take responsibility for determining what goes on inside the school (McLoughlin, 1987).

Teachers and parents need to form a new kind of relationship to help children learn--a partnership which acknowledges more fully the need for the schools to share educational decision making with parents. Educators have long believed that parents' meaningful involvement is critical when planning for children's educational success and can be fostered during parent-teacher conferences.

In the light of these circumstances, school personnel need to confer more frequently and clearly with parents than ever before. Professional journals and training institutions, however, seem to

devote very little attention to the development of appropriate
parent conference skills so that parents' inquiries or concerns about
their children may be dealt with as appropriately as possible
(Birnie, 1980).

The need to confer is certainly apparent. Parents have a
right to know and need to be involved in many school issues, especially
concerning their child's progress. One of the jobs of school personnel
is to provide parents with what they want to know in as meaningful a
way as possible. This will require that staff members, teachers, ad-
ministrators, and support personnel conduct conferences with parents
and confer on matters about which school personnel might in the past
have made unilateral decisions. Such conferences will mean addi-
tional demands on staff time and require greater skills in conduct-
ing parent conferences (Losen & Diament, 1978).

Statement of the Problem

Many teachers and perhaps an equal number of parents approach
the conference season with trepidation, nervousness, insecurity, and
dread. They audibly sigh with relief when conferences are over.
Others see the conference as a perfunctory ritual. Both parent and
teacher are weary of being the recipient of a gratuitous attack, a
questioning of motives, and being blamed for past events; in addition,
teachers may simply have concerns about increasing their workload.
Anyone who teaches children feels the pangs of insecurity as parents
challenge or even question what is happening in the classroom.

Sometimes, misguided teachers have covertly preferred for their own sake, compliant parents (Wolf & Stephens, 1982). Teachers may feel that parents hold unreasonable goals for children, and that when they try to help parents assess realistically the child's potential they are accused of being insensitive, uncaring, or uninformed (Canady & Seyfarth, 1972). Opportunities for enhancing the child's education are sapped by mutual fears of excessive demands or a personal attack from the other party (Carlson & Hillman, 1975).

This need not be the case. Parents and teachers can work together without fear of cramping their styles, and conferences can be both productive and worthwile experiences. In fact, unless parents and teachers work together the children are likely to lose, for the cooperative enterprise of modern education is predicated on partnership between both parties. Parent conferences need to be based on give and take, confidence, and cooperation (McLoughlin, 1987).

Parents and teachers know there are theoretical models that describe communication between individuals and that schools invest many resources to make teacher conferences an important and viable part of the school year. What is not as readily known is what happens in parent-teacher conferences--how teachers plan for the conferences and what they actually do during the parent-teacher conference. There is no model that describes teacher planning and decision making relative to parent-teachers conferences, nor is there a description of how these elements interrelate regarding conferences. The intent of the researcher was to identify the major characteristics

that described successful parent-teacher conferences and how these elements would be used to help teachers improve their conferencing skills.

Parent-teacher conferences contain some similar characteristics and design. The first similarity is that of the usual time constraint; conferences are scheduled for a particular timeframe, which can act as both a hindrance or a help. The process of communication is essential. The teacher must make quick and accurate decisions about where the conference should lead the teacher and parent as a team. The teacher's decisions, just as they affect a daily lesson, will determine the success of the conference. The teacher must, most of all, send a message to the parents that their child is foremost in the planning and focus of that teacher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical model that described teacher thoughts and decision-making processes which occurred while the teacher was planning for the parent-teacher conference as well as during the conference.

This model was developed by identifying specific parent-teacher communication characteristics based upon a general communication model and current research related to parent-teacher conferences. A comparison of these identified communciation characteristics and the perceptions of parents was made to identify a group of elementary teachers who practiced good decision-making techniques during parent-

teacher conferences. These teachers served as the primary resource people in developing the decision-making model.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Teachers who are more effective communicators will make more decisions that conform to a theoretical decision-making model during parent-teacher conferences and will cover a wider variety of appropriate topics than teachers who are less effective communicators.

Hypothesis Two

Teachers who are more effective communicators will exhibit conference behaviors that conform more closely to a theoretical model of the communication process and specifically will make greater use of the feedback element than teachers who are less effective communicators.

Objectives

Objective One

To determine, through the analysis of audiotaped parent-teacher conferences, the type and/or kind of teacher decision making that occurs during this two-way interaction.

Objective Two

To determine individual teachers' assessments of their effectiveness as a communicator and decision maker during the parent-teacher conference.

Objective Three

     To determine individual parent assessments of a teacher's effectiveness as a communicator and decision maker during a parent-teacher conference.

Objective Four

     To develop a set of recommendations for a comprehensive staff development program based upon effective communication techniques and the decision-making process.

Theoretical Perspective

     Parent-teacher conferences are one example of people applying communication skills. As a starting point, the following example of a theoretical model is presented.

     In a communication model, a source (S) encodes or invents a message (M), which is then conveyed, verbally or non-verbally, along some kind of channel (C) to a receiver (R), who then decodes or reinterprets the message and then tries to respond to it by using some form of feedback (F) (Larson, 1976). The communication model described by Larson is one that outlines the communication process in general. The researcher used these general concepts and definitions and applied them to the research conducted regarding parent-teacher communications (see Figure 1).

     There are several ways to discover what constitutes effective communication. The wisdom of scholars and their theories about communication, past and present, could be reviewed, or the works of

Aristotle, Cicero, journalists, sociologists, psychologists, and
teachers of speech could be read. Another method would be to isolate
the fundamentals of speech--those skills of delivery, organization,
and wording that are important--and practice them to develop good
posture and eye contact, clear structure in messages, and an
interesting style in wording (Larson, 1976).

```
        (encode)                        (verbal)
   Source -------- Message -------- Channel --------
     (S)             (M)              (C)  (nonverbal)


        (decodes)
     Receiver ------------------- FEEDBACK
       (R)   (reinterprets)          (F)
```
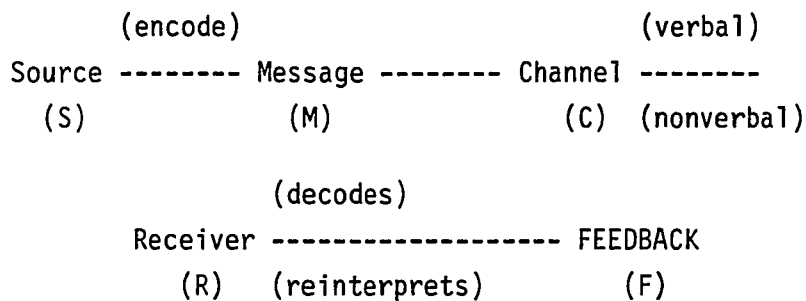
FIGURE 1

A Communication Model

Source: Larson, 1976

Another way to assess communication effectiveness is by a
kind of self-analysis, which is what people have been doing most of
their lives. Carefully analyzing communication "encounters," as they
may be called, is the approach used to study communication. Persons
are allowed to watch both themselves and others actively communicating
and to analyze both the creating and sending of messages and the
receiving and interpreting of them.

Communication encounters are of many types and varied dura-
tion; they may involve many kinds and numbers of persons. In all

such encounters, people need to become more aware of what is happening. They need to focus on the effective, sensitive, and perceptive communication cues that are used and to learn from these observations.

Working with other people on a common problem or topic can be frustrating; everyone has a different view of the problem and its potential solutions. One difficulty is to determine the perceptions of the people with whom one is communicating; how they see things and how to respond to them must be determined. Another difficulty is being diplomatic and not saying the wrong thing that will only aggravate others. Another problem is deciding when to make a point; timing is essential when trying to get others to see things. If one fails to pick the right time to make a point, one's hopes and causes may be impeded. Finally, people have difficulty saying what they want to naturally. No one wants to hear a rehearsed speech; the comments must seem spontaneous and natural.

Definitions

Communication. The act of exchanging thoughts, information, or messages through the process of speaking or writing. Verbal communication is centered around the sender (person speaking) and the receiver (person listening).

Decoding. The process of taking information that has been received and assessing its meaning, applications, and implications.

Feedback. The process of the receiver communicating with the sender in an effort to respond to the information that has been received.

Parent-teacher conference. A meeting between the parents
of students and their teacher to try to help students get the best
possible education to meet their individual needs. The conference
is held primarily at the invitation of the teacher.

Sender. In the process of communication, the individual who
is processing the information that is being distributed to the in-
dividuals receiving the messages.

Stimulated recall. The process of interviewing persons soon
after they have had some identified experience to gain indepth in-
formation concerning that experience.

Assumptions

1. The parent-teacher conferencing skills exhibited by
elementary classroom teachers in the research study school system
were represetnative of the skills exhibited by other elementary
taechers in similar school settings.

2. The procedure of audiotaping the parent-teacher confer-
ences will not affect the discussion during the conference or the end
result of the conference.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to the skills and perceptions of
teachers and parents toward parent-teacher conferences in selected
elementary schools in the research study school system.

2. The study was limited by taping only selected conferences for each teacher. Such a limitation could produce an awareness for additional preparation related to those selected conferences.

3. The study was limited to the verbal portion of the communication that took place. Non-verbal interaction that took place could be of great importance but was not analyzed.

Importance of the Study

This study provides information that will help educators more effectively understand the importance of planning, decision-making, and effective communication in the parent-teacher conference setting.

Educators, through this undertaking will learn to communicate in clear, understandable, and essentially simple terms with parents. Parents and the teacher must find ways of mutually expressing their concerns about children and understanding their different and complementary viewpoints.

Parents and educators are approximately equal in their relative impact at home and in school. Thus, they also have an equal and shared responsibility to find ways of resolving conflicts and creatively developing cooperation that is in the best interest of the child.

Methods

Sample

One of the populations used in this study included the kindergarten through sixth grade elementary teachers in a Class III Nebraska school district. The other population used included the parents of children who attended the elementary schools in this school district.

The first part of the research design included a process to study the thought processes and parent-conferencing behaviors of approximately 30 elementary teachers. These teachers were instructors in grades kindergarten through six and taught in three of the eight elementary schools in the school system selected for this research project. The superintendent of the school district recommended the three elementary schools used in the study. The reasons for having the superintendent make this selection were twofold: his knowledge of the capabilities and the expertise of the elementary staff and access to a wide variety of experience and instructional characteristics in the teachers through his recommendation.

In the second part of this research design, parents were contacted who had children enrolled in the classrooms of the sample group of teachers. This was done by sending a letter to all parents who planned to attend the second conference and asking them to participate in the project.

Design

The research was a theoretical model-building project. This design was used to show relationships between (1) the identified characteristics of the theoretical communication model (Objective 1), (2) the identified parent-teacher conference characteristics found in the research literature, (3) an analysis of the teacher questionnaire (Objective 2), and (4) an analysis of the parent questionnaire (Objective 3).

The characteristics of the communication model and parent-teacher conference characteristics identified by research literature were used as the basis for studying how teachers planned for and interacted during parent-teacher conferences. The final step in the design was to develop a set of recommendations concerning staff development relative to parent-teacher conferencing (Objective 4).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While parent-teacher conferences in the elementary schools
are extremely important, neither parents nor teachers ordinarily
look forward to them. Although conferences could ensure further
communication about the child, they very often make further communica-
tion difficult, if not impossible. Successful conferences do not
happen by accident; they result from careful planning and diligent
effort. Successful conferences are measured by changes in the
individuals involved in the conferences. These changes need to have
an impact upon the child as a result of the conferences, if one
is to assume conferences will improve the education of that
student.

The review of related literature and research presented in
this chapter has been divided into three major areas that affect the
success of parent-teacher conferences. The first section contains
a review of the process, theories, and insights of human communica-
tion. The process and understanding of communication is key to
the working relationship between parents and teachers. The second
section includes a review of the literature investigating teacher
decision making and its implications. Decisions that are made by
teachers during the conference determine the present and future
directions of service to the individual child. The third section,
the most extensive, reports information from the literature and

research regarding the actual implementation of parent-teacher conferences. This information is key to a look at some actual situations of conferencing as part of the data collection process in this study.

Communication

One of the general features or components of communication is the idea of meaning: an importance or significance that a person attaches to something. Crable (1979) indicated that in communication studies, things someone attaches meaning to are called symbols; symbols can be both verbal and non-verbal. What connects the concerns of meaning and symbols is that communication is a process--an ongoing, dynamic activity. Cherry (1982) stated that the development of language reflects back upon thought; with language thoughts may become organized and new thoughts can evolve. Self-awareness and the sense of social responsibility have arisen as a result of organized thoughts.

Communication involves the idea of recreated meaning: the creation of a meaning that is similar to one person's in the mind of another. If a person has not succeeded in making the other person understand what he or she means, that person has not communicated (Crable, 1979). Steinfatt (1977) described communciation as a process, a continuous interaction of many variables, all of which affect each other at the same time. A process has no fixed beginning or end and is not a fixed sequence of events. Structuring the process of

communication involves the selection of relevant variables that help to explain why and how the process operates.

Babcock (1952) stated that from a communicative point of view, the event may be observed as the employment of symbols (act), under specific circumstances (scene), by an individual or individuals (agent), using selected media (agency), for defined ends (purpose). This is a way of saying that any event is arbitrarily bounded by the limitations of what, who, when, where, how, and why. These determinants co-mingle, unite, overlap in the events, and are in the strictest sense inseparable, in that no one of the terms can be defined adequately without mention of the others.

Communication is a transaction: a process in which changes or exchanges occur. When one has communicated a meaning to another person, that person is changed because of the new idea or insight. The communicator has also changed because he or she may know the other person shares the meaning of an idea. In addition, the meaning the communicator had may have changed because of the response the other person had to the idea. Whether the changes are in the people, ideas, or in the meaning, communication will involve ongoing change for as long as the process continues. Communication will always be a transaction; changes of some sort will always occur because of the process of communication.

In research conducted by Borgstrom (1986), two recommendations were outlined that dealt directly with communication and the parent-teacher conference. The recommendations were as follows:

(1) There should be an exchange of information between parents and teachers prior to the conference to determine objectives of the individual conference; and (2) A school should develop specific guidelines for its parent-teacher conferences that specifically relate to communication techniques.

The following definitions are associated with the Communications Model (see Figure 2) as described by Crable (1979):

Communicators. People who have meanings they wish to share, or people who wish to have a meaning shared with them.

Conceptual screens. Factors such as levels of knowledge, kinds of past experiences, and various beliefs that give each individual somewhat unique characteristics.

Message. The oral statement, written comment, facial expression, or non-verbal activity that is created by the communicator who wishes to have a meaning recreated.

Feedback. The response that the other individual makes to the original message.

Media. The vehicle used to carry or allow the sending of messages.

Interference. The factors in any part of the communication process that hinder successful meaning recreation.

Steinfatt (1977) related that in communication between persons, certain goals or desires are usually present in a situation. Very little human behavior of any kind, especially human communication behavior, occurs without a goal or reason. Most human
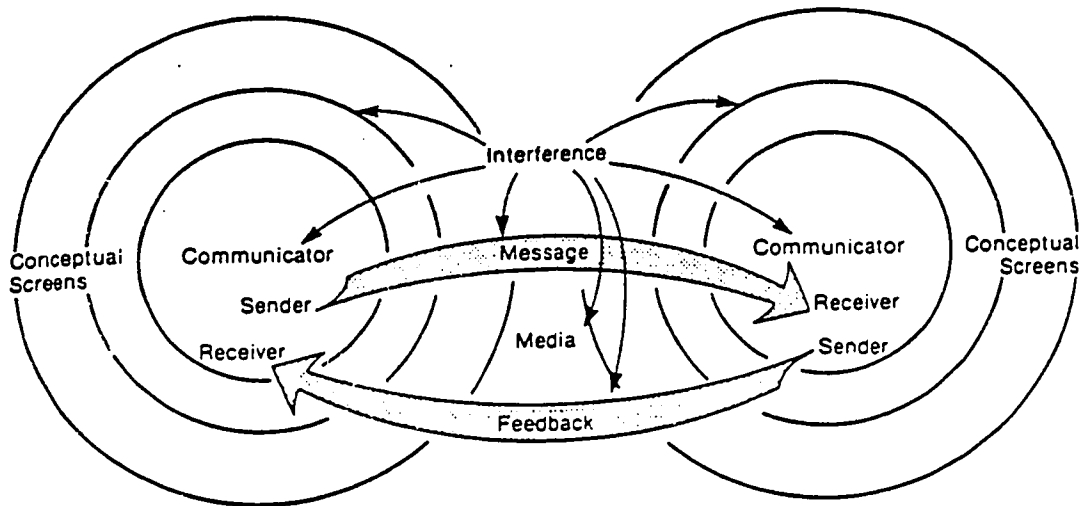
FIGURE 2

Elements of a Communication Model

Source: Crable, 1979

communication behavior is usually goal-directed, not only in obvious

learning and working and cooperating situations, but in the vast

majority of human interactions. Larson (1976) described an inter-

personal encounter exchange between at least two persons in which

communication is used to discover information about one another

or about shared problems and which involves role, strategy, rules,

and feedback.

Bedwell, Hunt, Touzel, and Wiseman (1984), in their discussions

about effective teaching with regard to preparation and implementation,

described a communication process that occurs between the teacher and

the students during instruction. The process, source, message, and

destination, is not unlike the communication process described by

Crable in Figure 2. Bedwell, Hunt, Touzel, and Wiseman's (1984) model addresses the necessary feedback portion of any successful communication system (see Figure 3).

**Source and Message
In Communication**   **Destination in
Communication**

```
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Teacher as beginning │ — │ Message represented  │ ─────────────────> │ Student as destina-  │
│ source in communica- │   │ by content selected  │                    │ tion in communica-   │
│ tion                 │   │ for instruction      │                    │ tion                 │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘                    └──────────────────────┘
          ↑        ╱                                                               │
          │    ╱                                                                   │
┌──────────────────────┐                        ┌──────────────────────────┐      ↓
│ Message received by  │                        │ •Student reacts in some  │
│ teacher from student │ <───────────────────── │ fashion to message       │ <─────┘
│ influences next      │                        │ received sending a       │
│ message sent by      │                        │ returning message to     │
│ teacher to student   │                        │ teacher                  │
└──────────────────────┘                        └──────────────────────────┘
```

FIGURE 3

Communication Model: Source, Message, and Destination

Source: Bedwell, Hunt, Touzel, and Wiseman (1984)

The following definitions for communication were taken from Dance and Larson's (1976) research on the functions of human communication:

1. Communication is the process by which one understands others and in turn endeavors to be understood by them. Communication is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the total situation.

2. Communication must be two-way, for the response is part of the process.

3. Communication is the transmission and interchange of facts, ideas, feelings, and courses of action.

4. Communication is a word that describes the process of transferring meaning from one individual to another.

5. Communication in its broadest sense may be defined as the eliciting of a response. Human communication is the eliciting of a response through verbal symbols.

6. Communication is a social process involving the phases of encoding, sending, medium, receiving, and decoding.

7. The communicative act denotes a reciprocal social relationship between a sender and a human receiver.

8. A working definition of communication is: "The process of sending and receiving messages."

9. Communication means, fundamentally, the stimulation in the minds of others of essentially one's own awareness, understanding, and sense of importance of the event, feeling, fact, opinion, or situation one is attempting to depict.

10. Communication is a process that makes common to two or several persons what was the monopoly of one or several persons.

There are various ways in which parents and teachers can develop productive communication skills. Four communication behaviors that are vital to parent-teacher interaction are: (1) approachability, (2) sensitivity, (3) flexibility, and (4) dependability. The approachable person is an individual who relates to people in positive ways. Sensitivity to the needs of others is vital to

building positive and continuous communications among parents and
teachers. The flexible person is able to perceive the situation
confronted by another person and then modify his or her plans to
accommodate the situation. To be dependable is to be consistent
in relating and responding to the needs of others (Dance & Larson, 1976).

Witherspoon (1983) evaluated the effect of a teacher train-
ing program which focused on developing specific communication skills
to improve teacher performance in parent-teacher conferences. Teachers
who took part in training sessions devoted to enhancing the communica-
tion skills of attending, listening, initiating, and responding were
perceived to be more effective by the parents with whom they con-
ferenced.

Swick (1981) raised the question of "Why do so many parents
and teachers lose faith in conducting parent-teacher conferences,
holding open house programs, making home visits, and planning
special parent-teacher related social activities?" A major reason,
according to Swick, is that these communication modes are too often
used in a superfluous manner and never emerge as the authentic
desires of parents or teachers. Whatever communication technique
is used by parents and teachers must be based upon a responsive
relationship where they behave in mature and reasonable ways.

Decision Making

The decisions made by the teacher during the actual parent-
teacher conference are critical to the success of the conference. When

the teacher assesses the needs of the child and parent as a result of the communication that has taken place, some decisions need to be made. These decisions are the driving forces for future work with the child and will determine the parent's attitude toward the teacher and the outcomes of the conference.

Any teaching act is the result of a decision, either conscious or unconscious. Shavelson (1973) contended that the basic teaching skill is decision making. What distinguishes the exceptional teacher from his or her colleagues is not the ability to ask a higher-order question, but the ability to decide when to ask such a question. Skills such as questioning and explaining represent the teacher's repertoire of alternative acts from which to choose, while skills such as listening and hypothesis generation influence the quality of information from which the teacher estimates the student's under-standing and the utility of alternative acts. One implication is that teacher training should include a decision-making component that integrates the other basic skills.

A number of models have been proposed to account for teachers' planning decisions. The model developed by Shavelson and Borko (1979) identifies the processes involved in making a particular decision. This model provides one way of thinking about teaching from a decision-making perspective and has proven helpful in explaining and integrating previous research findings and in planning research. A set of questions and conjectures about components of the teacher's planning process is suggested: what information teachers use in making

instructional decisions and how institutional constraints, external pressures, and individual differences between teachers affect these decisions (see Figure 4).

Sutcliffe and Whitfield (1979) indicated that a teacher is, to a great extent, a decision maker in a situation of constant social exchange. If the teacher is unable to make a decision at the right moment or has inadequate social relations, this can easily have an adverse effect on any situation both now and in the future. Sutcliffe and Whitfield (1979) went on to suggest that if the successful or effective teacher becomes characterized as one who consistently makes sound or appropriate decisions in order to implement a set of desirable intentions concerned with pupil's learning, then the judgment of the teacher becomes an additional dimension in order to link teacher efffectiveness with teacher decision-making behavior.

Decision making is pervasive in the roles that teachers play. Regardless of the actual number, decisions--sometimes concious but more often not--are involved in almost every aspect of a teacher's professional life, especially in planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction. Most, if not all teaching, is based on decisions made by the teacher after complex cognitive processing of available information.

In general, five features of decisions can be used to describe decision making in teaching:

1. A decision involves the choice of teaching from an alternative act.
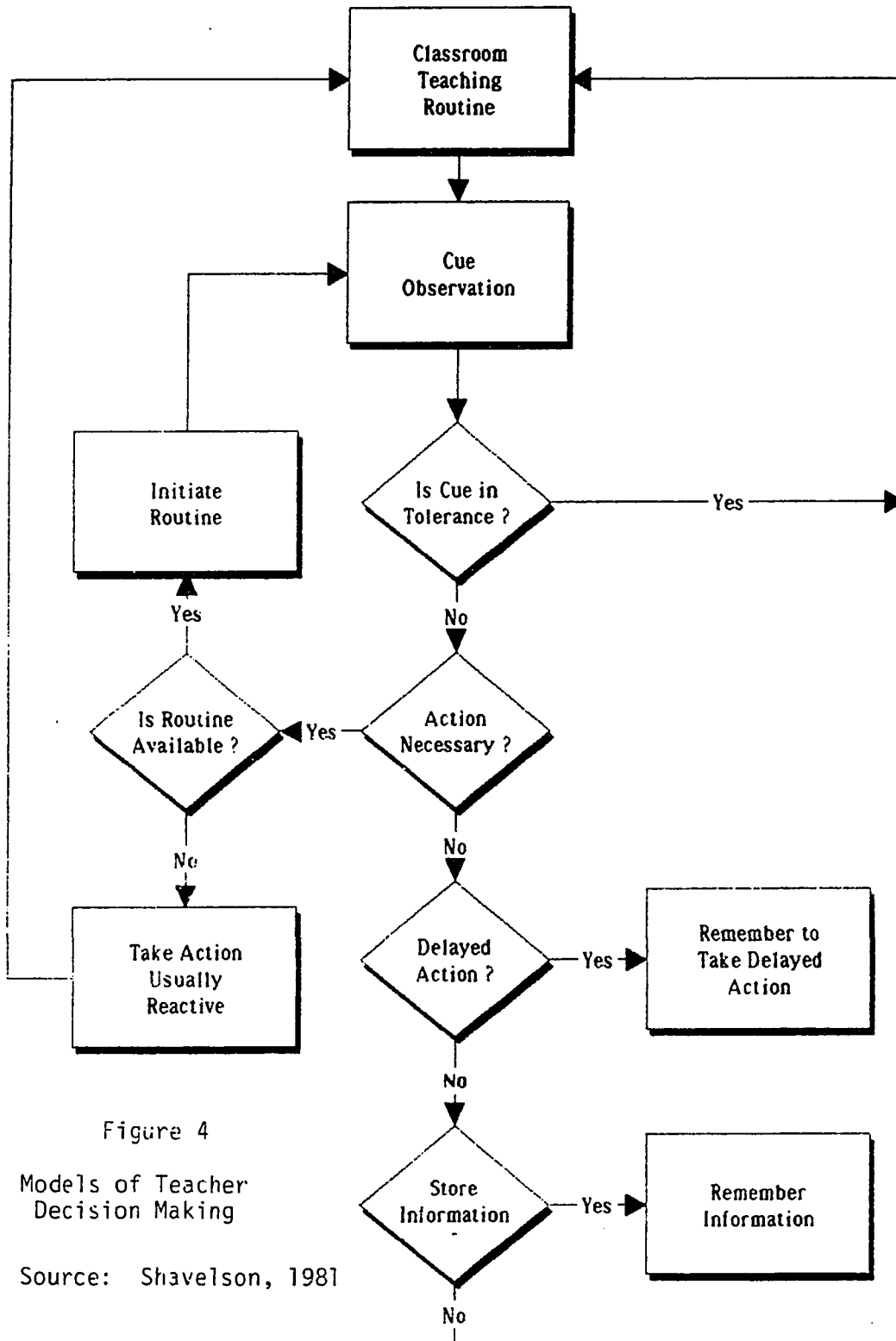
Figure 4

Models of Teacher
Decision Making

Source: Shavelson, 1981

2. A second feature, referred to as states of nature, refers
to environmental conditions, which are not directly under the
teacher's control but which influence the effectiveness of a par-
ticular course of action.

3. The outcome feature means that at least one outcome can
be identified for each combination of a course of action with a state
of nature.

4. The fourth feature deals with utility, which indicates
that the measure of outcome can be transformed to correspond to the
teacher's subjective interpretation.

5. The goal or set of goals that the decision is intended
to attain comprises the last feature (Shavelson, 1976).

Decisions made while planning instruction may be the most
important ones teachers make. Unlike decisions during interactive
teaching, decisions made in planning can be pondered, as they have
the advantage of time.

Decisions made while the teacher is interacting with students
may be planned, extemporaneous, or a mixture of both. Most interactive
decisions are probably modifications of decisions made in planning for
instruction. These modifications in the earlier decisions are made
on the spur of the moment; thus factors bearing on decisions made
during interactive teaching probably are not defined as completely
or accurately as those on which preactive decisions are based.

The idea of planning certainly plays an integral role in the
process of teacher instruction and decision making. Zahorik (1970)

reported that no idea in education is more widely accepted than the idea that specific, thorough planning for a lesson makes the teaching-learning encounter valuable and productive. Conversely, no planning, or general and haphazard planning, leads to a wasteful, unproductive lesson. This notion pervades education at all levels and in all subject areas.

Zahorik (19875) developed a list of eight categories used to classify teacher decisions made with regard to classroom instruction:

1) Objectives - Decisions about goals, aims, outcomes, or purposes

2) Content - Decisions about the nature of the subject matter to be taught, such as identifica- of facts, events, or other aspects.

3) Activities - Decisions about the type of learning activity or experience to be used.

4) Materials - Decisions about resources to be used such as books, films, field trip sites, and guest speakers.

5) Diagnosis - Decisions about students' readiness for the particular lesson or session. This would include students' previous learning as well as their ability and interests.

6) Evaluation - Decisions about how to determine the effec- tiveness of the lesson or session.

7) Instruction - Decisions about teacher verbal and non- verbal behaviors and teaching strategies to be used.

8) Organiza- tion - Decisions about how to arrange the teaching- learning environment, such as grouping of students, use of space, and use of time.

Similar to Zahorik, Bedwell et al. (1984) indicated that at the heart of any successful teaching episode is quality planning. There

are many points to consider when preparing for high caliber instruc-
tion. For example, questions concerning objectives, strategies, re-
sources, and evaluative criteria must be addressed. Beyond these
issues, the teacher and the role he or she assumes in the classroom
are of utmost concern in the teaching process. Teacher behaviors
as they impact on student behaviors often prove to be the ultimate
measures of success or failure in the lesson which has been carefully
planned. The development of prerequisite skills in planning for and
delivering instruction does not come naturally; determined and knowl-
edgeable preparation on the part of the teacher is required. Shavelson
(1973) demontrated this need in his chart (see Figure 5) in which
teacher-child interaction is described.

| Child gives specific information | → | Teacher seeks extension of information | → | Child provides requested information | → | Teacher attempts to lift level of thought from "information" level to "reason" level | → | Child provides reason as requested by teacher | → | Teacher gives approval |
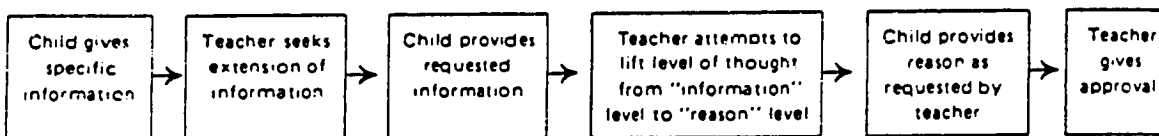
FIGURE 5

Flowchart of Teacher-Child Interaction

Source: Shavelson, 1973

The analysis of particular decisions made by teachers while they
are involved in the process of planning and delivering instruction
has long been a challenge. Shavelson and Stern (1981) described pro-
cess-tracing and stimulated recall as two techniques that can be used
to analyze teacher decisions. In process-tracing, the subjects

asked to "think aloud" while they are performing a task. For example, teachers were asked to think aloud while they planned a particular social studies lesson. The resultant verbal protocol became the data to be analyzed. Stimulated recall is typically used when the process-tracing technique would interfere with the subject's performance on a task. For example, asking teachers to "think aloud" while they are conducting a lesson is not usually feasible. In that case, the lesson is either audiotaped or videotaped. The lesson is then played back for the teacher, and the teacher recalls particular reasons why certain decisions were made in certain circumstances during the lesson.

Clearly, the skill of decision making plays an extremely important role as the teacher presents a lesson to a group of students. The decisions the teacher makes during the lesson determine the direction of the instruction; such decisions are based upon the needs, interaction, and feedback from the students themselves. Some researchers have contended that decision making is the most important teaching skill. In the opinion of this researcher, decision-making skills are just as important to the success of the parent-teacher conference. The decisions that determine the responses made to parents during the conference set the stage for the overall impact of the conference. These responses must be made by the teachers based on their assessment of the communication that takes place during the conference.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are teachers' best means of communicating with parents (Bailard & Strong, 1964). In this face-to-face exchange, information and ideas about the child are shared, insight is gained, attitudes are discovered, and plans for furthering the student's best development are reviewed. From preschool years through high school, skillfully conducted conferences with parents have been enlightening to parents and teachers and beneficial to children and adolescents. They are part of the modern teacher's responsibility. Kukula (1987) discovered that specific training for pre-service teaching regarding techniques in effectively meeting the parents of a student had a great effect on the self-esteem of teachers who received the training. Increased teacher self-esteem can only enhance the benefits to the children involved.

Interpersonal communication skills are at the heart of effective parent-teacher conferences and the parent-teacher relationship in general. "Communication . . . is the key to good home-school relations" and "the parent-teacher conference is the most direct and most meaningful mode of communciation between the home and the school (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987).

Very few educators would dispute that efficient communication is a key element to good home-school relations. Yet, not all will agree that the teacher's task is to initiate this communication through meaningful contacts with parents, contacts which include the parent conference. Educators have the responsibility to set the scene for the parent contact; as professionals, they should not shirk their leadership role in initiating these needed and necessary contacts.

McLoughlin (1987) indicated that teachers should take the initiative in communicating effectively; "how" teachers communicate as well as "what" they say are potential models for parents who have poorly developed skills in sharing their thoughts. According to Aesop, "example is the best precept." Communication is undeniably a two-way matter. If as a "transmitter," one is faced with a "receiver" who appears determined to sabotage communication, the job is clearly an uphill struggle. Each participant must aim at being perceptive, keep assumptions tentative, and be willing to take time to arrive at a mutual understanding.

There are many ways in which verbal communciation may affect the success of the parent-teacher conference. Often, parents and

teachers do not speak the same language; they can be separated by seas of misunderstanding. Thus, what the teacher says does not evoke the desired response from the parent. Misunderstandings may also arise when the teacher speaks too rapidly, uses long, involved sentences, or fails to cite concrete examples. Sometimes the teacher is too impersonal; the conference degenerates into a lecture on education.

Both parent and teacher should leave the conference with a feeling of satisfaction, with the conviction that "it was good for us to have been here." Both parent and teacher should have obtained some insight into the child's best development, his or her behavior, or some clarification of a specific problem; they should have reached some specific decision about the next step to be taken or should have made a positive change in their perceptions of the child or of themselves. The true test of the success of a parent-teacher conference is to be found in the parent's subsequent behavior toward the child and the effect this had had on him or her (Bailard & Strong, 1964).

The primary elements of effective working relationships between teachers and parents are communciation and cooperation (Welch & Tisdale, 1986). When teachers and parents are able to cooperate and communicate openly and honestly about the education of children, better programs result. Parent-teacher conferences are an important aspect of cooperation and communication. In a research study by Paldi (1984),

he noted there was a moderate, positive, and statistically signif-
icant correlation between the parents' opinion of the parent-teacher
conference and the parents' attitude toward school. This correla-
tion reinforces the importance of the parent-teacher conference as
it relates to improving and reinforcing good home-school relations.

The communications process is built upon the premise that
people want to convey their ideas and feelings and are capable of
listening to the ideas and expressions of other people. Parents
and teachers should be the most effective communicators in society.
Yet communicating is more than talking and hearing. Communicating
is a process by which people formulate their plans for either acting
in concert toward common goals, achieving individual aspirations,
or attempting to modify the behaviors of other people (see
Figure 6).
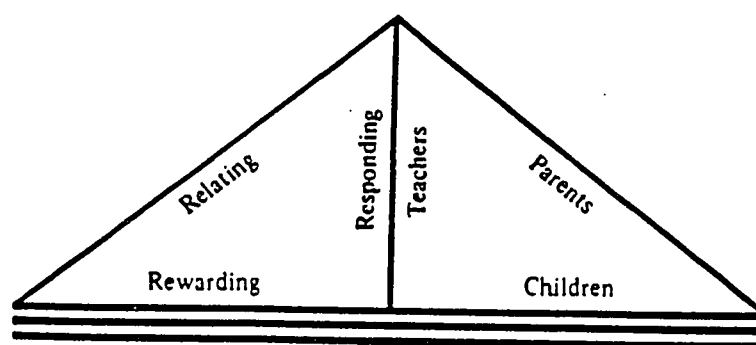
FIGURE 6

Parent/Teacher Communication Techniques

Source: Swick, 1981

The individual conference is one of the most widely used parent-teacher communication techniques (Swick, 1981). Unfortunately, the individual conference is often used for the wrong reason and is conducted in a hasty and unorganized manner. If the individual conference is to be an effective communications tool, it must serve a specific purpose and be planned and conducted in an orderly fashion. An effective parent-teacher conference requires considerable planning, preparation, and eventually some form of evaluation and follow-up. The following are ideas to use in developing and implementing productive conferences:

1. Pre-planning. The best conference is that conference that is well-planned in advance.

2. Readying materials. The purpose of the conference will dictate what kind of materials the teacher will need to organize for the actual conference.

3. Communication with parents. Communicate with the parents of the children on all aspects of the conference.

4. Arranging the physical setting. The most productive conferences are conducted in physical settings that invite discussion and comfortable exchange of ideas between parent and teacher.

5. Conducting the conference. Set a positive tone for the conference by first discussing how the child has progressed and then constructively offer ideas on how the child can improve.

6. Follow-up and evaluation. The initial conference between parent and teacher can and should establish a basis for continuous

communications among the parent, teacher, and children throughout the year.

Parents and teachers have never had greater contact with each other. Years ago, a note sent home with a child meant that there was trouble brewing at the school. Modern-day parents receive many, many communications from the school in the space of a single academic year. Notes from the teacher are now likely to send a different message, one that is underpinned by an implied statement: "Let's be partners in the business of education." Nevertheless, the initial comment by most parents to a telephone call from the class teacher is, "Has something happened to my child?" (Pickens, 1978). Once one or two teacher conferences have successfully been completed, parents eagerly return for meetings. When parents feel their presence is requested as more than a formality, they willingly play an active, participatory role in their children's education (McLoughlin, 1987).

What are some of the realities about parent-teacher conferences? In schools across the nation, parents and teachers meet formally to discuss a mutual concern--the child--two to four times a year. However, these formal or semi-formal conferences are only the tip of the iceberg if the sum total of all teacher and school contacts with parents is considered. Mager (1980) noted that the typical teacher initiates approximately 375 contacts with parents during the school year. In addition, Mager reported an average of 340 school-initiated contacts and a further 180 contacts made by parents to teachers each school year. This is a greater number than

represented by the formal, mandated conference format and includes all occasions where a teacher independently develops contact with a parent.

Olson (1981) indicated that teacher behavior will change as a result of participation in inservice training in the area of parent-teacher relations. In Olson's study, this behavior change showed a definite increase in the number of personal and written contacts that occurred between the teachers and the parents of their students. This increased contact can only prove to better serve the needs of each individual child in the teachers' classrooms.

Regardless of the number of incidental contacts a teacher has with a parent, the formal conference setting provides an opportunity for the teacher to make the best use of planned time with that parent. Beals (1973) surveyed a sampling of parents in the public elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia to identify problems that parents had concerning parent-teacher conferences in their schools. Beals concluded that parents had great confidence in the current parent-teacher conference situation, the conferences did facilitate communication with the parents, and the teachers understood their students as "people." This study reinforced the concept of the importance of time set aside for conferences in the elementary school setting.

No information on conferencing should be regarded as a never-failing formula. The "inflexibility" of the teacher who treats the conference as equivalent to a paint-by-numbers exercise

will become very clear early on in the conference experience. Every conference needs to be thoughtfully tailored to the circumstances of the particular family and planned with a brief outline. The importance of planning and organization cannot be overemphasized. One fact is certain: If the details are left unattended, the meeting will begin to collapse in confusion.

McLoughlin (1987) indicated that efficient and well-planned teacher-to-parent communication techniques are an excellent means for developing a two-way working relationship that fosters improved understanding of children as individuals. Schools exist for one purpose: the development of children's abilities, interests, and potentials. How well these qualities are developed depends on the ongoing and intensive interplay of forces exerted by home and school.

Adequate and appropriate preparation is a vital ingredient for efficient, effective, and successful parent-teacher conferences. Preparation involves the fullest appraisal of all the skills and steps necessary for coordinating arrangements, setting the scene, gathering appropriate data, recognizing and accommodating the parents' orientations and expectations, and establishing reasonable goals. All of these concerns are to be addressed prior to meeting your first parent in conference.

Conferences need to be as carefully choreographed as any ballet. Yet, conferences must also retain sufficient flexibility so that both the teacher and parent can stay in step. Little can be gained without mutual understanding.

A parent-teacher conference is a short-term, purposeful exchange between a child's teacher and his or her parents (Welch & Tisdale, 1986). There are two major reasons for parent-teacher conferences. The first reason conferences are held is to obtain and/or convey information. The second reason is to solve a problem--the child's, the teacher's, or the parent's. During the initial contact, whether made by the teacher or the parent, the purpose of the conference should be explained by the initiator. Once the purpose is clear, both the parent and the teacher can make the preparations necessary for a productive conference. The key to a successful conference is prior planning. When the teacher and parents are organized and well-prepared for a conference, a great deal can be accomplished in a short amount of time.

Many teachers as well as administrators are somewhat confused as to the proper organization of a meeting with parents and possess little skill in using proven interview techniques that effectively produce both information and a positive attitude on the part of parents.

Teachers engaged in conferences with parents must stop talking so much and learn how to listen. The teachers should keep in mind that when listening to parental complaints, they not only learn about parental attitudes toward the school, but also gain respect for being sympathetic and understanding human beings.

Listening, according to Rotter, Robinson, and Fey (1987) forms the foundation of all interpersonal communication models. Most

people feel that if nothing else, listening is something they can do well, but research has indicated otherwise. Effective listening is not a passive process; listening is an active process that requires hard work and concentration. The following are hindrances to effective listening:

1. The attitude with which one listens.

2. Listeners often concentrate on what they are going to say instead of what the speaker is saying.

3. Letting the mind drift off to other concerns while still appearing to listen.

4. Prejudging the individual or his or her intent. (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987)

Attending skills are related to the physical aspects of listening and valuing the individual. By facial expression, eye contact, physical touch, voice tone, and gestures, the teacher receives as well as sends many messages.

Perceiving differs from listening and attending in that listening and attending involve collecting all the cues the parent provides--words, meaning, tones, expressions, and gestures--from an intellectual standpoint, whereas perceiving is bringing all the cues to personal awareness in an attempt to comprehend. Perceiving skills focus on understanding all that the individual has attempted to communicate--words, feelings, meanings, and emotions.

Responding is the culmination of the three previous skill areas. To respond most effectively, the teacher must first be aware of and responsive to the affective meaning, the content, the nonverbal cues, and the emotional level of all that precedes

the response. A response must convey that the teacher heard and understood what is not there or go beyond the intent of the parent's statement; the teacher's response should not be more shallow than the parent's statement.

Kroth (1975) used the following definitions to describe the different types of listeners that are shown in Figure 7.

Passive listener. The passive listener is "there" and is "with it." The passive listener thinks out loud with the parent, who usually feels confident that what is said will stop in the room. The parent is often surprised that so much time has passed or that the parent and teacher could talk so much.

Active listener. A person who is actively involved in helping other persons identify and clarify their problems, beliefs, and value systems. One of the major strengths of the use of active listening is that it keeps the problem where it belongs, with the parent.

Passive non-listener. The passive non-listener seems to "hear" what is being said, but is not involved in listening to the feeling content of the message. This posture can be frustrating to the one who is trying to communicate with another person.

Active non-listener. Both parent and teacher are trying to communicate and cooperate, but they are not taking the time to listen to what the other has to say. Little is accomplished, but both feel they have had their say about their problems.

Ideally, the maximum benefits result when both parents and teachers have adequate interpersonal communication skills and come

A LISTENING PARADIGM

Listening

|

A | B

Passive ————————————|———————————— Active

|

C | D

|
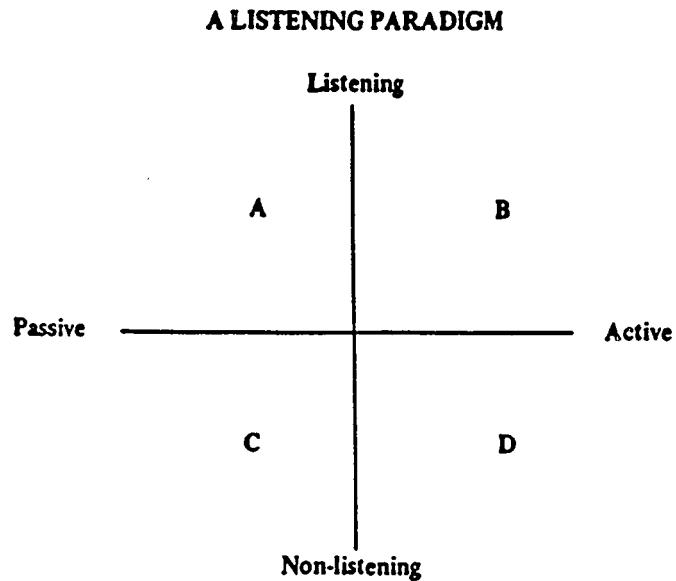
Non-listening

FIGURE 7

A Listening Paradigm

Source: Kroth, 1975

together to meet whatever goal may be essential to a child's continued growth and development (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987). The assumption can be made that the teacher is in a better position to control the intervening variables that inhibit productive conferences. Control of the conference does not mean that a teacher dominates the conversation. The teacher, as a professional, is always aware of moving the conference toward a specific goal that seeks to promote the success of the child in the educational setting.

Rowe (1964), in a study of Nebraska teachers, discovered
there is no one way of handling the conference program in all systems.
However, inherent in all programs should be some of the following
aspects:

1. Both parents and teachers must understand and agree upon
the reporting procedures and objectives.

2. Enough time should be allocated to accomplish a success-
ful exchange of information and insights between the teacher and the
parent.

3. A well-balanced inservice program must be established
for the teachers to assure the proper basis of approach and participa-
tion.

In a humorous analogy of the parent conference with gourmet
cooking, an Oak Park, Illinois school's newsletter developed "A
Recipe for a Successful Parent-Teacher Conference." The ingredients
and preparation instructions were as follows:

Ingredients:

One parent and one teacher (for that extra special
touch, an extra parent can be added). Select a teacher
who has an understanding of the child and a keen desire to
use all possible means to help him. Select parents who
recognize their child's abilities and inabilities, and
who can discuss the child frankly and sympathetically.

Preparation:

Mix gently, being careful not to bruise feelings.
Bring out full flavor by a judicious dash of expressed
appreciation and/or honest compliments.

Time:

20 to 30 minutes

Outcome:

A better learning situation and adjustment for the child.

Conferences are curiously complex procedures involving interactive dynamics which are extremely difficult to quantify. The "flavor" of the previous recipe helps to capture this qualitative complexity. To a great extent, the success or failure of the parent-teacher conference depends on the personalities involved. The adherence to some well-founded principles increases the odds in favor of finishing with three winners: teacher, parent, and child.

Summary

The review of literature conducted for this research project produced a wide variety of research and expert opinion dealing with the areas of communication, teacher decision making, and parent-teacher conferences. The literature that dealt with communication centered around the four major topics of the sender (who sends the message), the message (what is being communicated), the receiver (who receives the message), and the feedback (the response from the receiver to the sender). In all types of communication, these characteristics are vitally important. The teacher decision-making literature dealt with the primary areas of questioning (seeking information), explaining (sharing information), planned decisions (goals that were previously determined by the sender), and extemporaneous decisions (responses given by the sender because of the comment from the receiver). The literature dealing with parent-teacher conferences revealed the four

major strands of planning (some type of pre-determined agenda), communication (interchange of messages), management (how well the conference is organized), and follow-up (the use of information from the conference to improve the student's educational opportunities.

The identification of these major themes from the literature allowed the researcher to use the themes as a lens through which to view the data that were collected during the parent-teacher conferences used in this study.

The major themes can be summarized as follows:

I. Communication

    A. Sender
    B. Message
    C. Receiver
    D. Feedback

II. Teacher Decision Making

    A. Questioning
    B. Explaining
    C. Planned Decisions
    D. Extemporaneous Decisions

III. Parent-Teacher Conferences

    A. Planning
    B. Communication
    C. Management
    D. Follow-up

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical model
that described teacher thoughts and decision-making processes which
occurred while the teacher was planning for the parent-teacher
conference, as well as during the conference.

This model was developed by identifying specific parent-teacher
communication characteristics based upon a general communication
model and current research related to parent-teacher conferences. A
comparison of these identified communication characteristics and the
perceptions of parents was made to identify a group of elementary
teachers who practiced good decision-making techniques during parent-
teacher conferences. These teachers served as the primary resource
people in developing the decision-making model.

Information was gathered through the development and use of a
parent questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, and individual teacher
interviews using the stimulated recall method. The teacher interviews
were audiotaped and subsequently converted into script form for
analysis. The analysis of these interview scripts was the primary source
for creating the conclusions of this research.

Pilot Project

The elementary school chosen for the pilot project was one
of ten elementary schools in a major K-12 education system in Nebraska.

This elementary school had seven classroom teachers who served students in grade kindergarten through grade six. The pilot project was completed during the fall parent-teacher conferences. Historically, an excess of 98 percent of the elementary parents attended parent-teacher conferences in the spring and the fall in this school system.

A meeting was held with the teaching staff at the pilot school to explain the project. Staff members were given packets that contained the following:

1. Sample parent letter (see Appendix A)

2. Rules for the teacher about audiotaping (see Appendix A)

3. Parent questionnaire (see Appendix A)

4. Teacher questionnaire (see Appendix A)

5. Set of labeled audiotapes

For the pilot project, each teacher was asked to identify three parents who could be contacted to participate in the pilot study. This produced a sample of 21 parent-teacher conferences. Of this group of 21 parents, 17 agreed to have their conferences audiotaped and to complete the parent questionnaire.

The elementary school pilot project group allowed the researcher to do the following:

1. Review the teacher directions that had been used to explain the process to the pilot teachers, assess the parent letter, and assess the needs associated with the audiotaping techniques to determine if any changes needed to be made regarding these topics.

2. Determine, by listening to the audiotapes, the process
that would be used with the teacher interviews during the actual
research. A form (see Appendix B) was developed to indicate specific
items on the conference audiotape that needed to be reviewed with
the teacher being interviewed. The review of the tapes allowed the
researcher to record the following data: (a) specific topics/items
that were discussed; (b) topics initiated by the teacher and topics
initiated by the parent; (c) decisions made by the teacher that were
either planned or extemporaneous; (d) responses by the teacher that
were either questions or explanations; and (e) communication/feedback
that occurred during the conference. This information became the
data that were used to generate discussions with the teachers during
the interview process. This particular interview technique, called
stimulated recall, related directly to the purpose of this study.
Stimulated recall is derived from a technique called process-tracing.
In a process-tracing study, the subjects are typically asked to "think
aloud" while they are performing a task, solving a problem, or reach-
ing a decision. Stimulated recall is used when the process-tracing
technique would interfere with the subject's performance on the task
(Shavelson, 1981). For example, asking a teacher to "think aloud"
while conducting a lesson usually is not feasible. Thus, the re-
searcher tapes the lesson, and the tape is played back during a subject
interview to assist the person in recalling mental activities that took
place during the activity that is being analyzed. Two additional
pages (see Appendix B) were used to gather some general information

for each of the teachers involved in the project.

3. Compare the teacher's and parent's assessment of the effectiveness of the communication that occurred during the conference. The analysis of the questionnaires (see Appendix B) provided this information.

The pilot project for the teachers produced suggestions dealing with the audiotaping directions. The pilot teachers believed that the placement of the tape player was critical to ensure proper recording of the conference; they also suggested that the tape player be running before the parent entered the room to produce a more relaxed atmosphere conducive to effective conferencing. The pilot responses on the parent and teacher questionnaires produced the following results: an average of 58 percent of the time the parents rated the teachers as being more effective than the teachers rated themselves 39 percent of the time the parent and teacher ratings were the same; and only two percent of the time did the teachers rate their effectiveness higher than the ratings by the parents.

Instrumentation

The validity for the teacher and parent questionnaires was established by using two panels of experts and asking them to respond to a validity questionnaire (see Appendix B). The teacher panel of experts was comprised of the seven faculty members at the pilot school and the teachers who acted as coordinators for the seven elementary grade levels in the school system where the pilot study

was completed. This created a panel of 14 teachers and a sampling from all seven elementary grade levels.

The parent panel of experts was comprised of the 15 parents who served as president or co-presidents of their local elementary school PTA's. All ten of the elementary buildings in the pilot school system were represented in this sampling group.

The reliability for the teacher and parent questionnaire was established by use of the test-retest method. The 23 staff members at two other elementary schools in the pilot school system were used as the teacher sample (see Appendix B). The 17 parents who participated in the audiotaping pilot project at the pilot school were used as the parent sample (see Appendix B).

The reliability data (see Appendix B) produced by the pilot project contained the following information: (1) the parents responded the same to the second set of questions 79 percent of the time; and (2) the teachers responded the same to the second set of questions 83 percent of the time. No changes were made in the parent and teacher questionnaires based upon the pilot study results. The reliability correlation coefficient for the parent questionnaire was .72 and .96 for the teacher questionnaire.

Dsecription of the School Setting

The school sysetm chosen for the research project was a major K-12 education system located in Nebraska. The city was located in the northeastern part of Nebraska along U.S. Highway 275 and had an

estimated population of 19,500 residents. At the time of this study, the school system was approved and accredited by the Nebraska State Department of Education. Beyond the minimum standards, the project school system was accredited by the North Central Association of School Accreditation and had earned the AA classification from the Nebraska Department of Education, a classification shared by only 36 of the K-12 school districts in Nebraska.

Organization of the schools was on a K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 basis. The elementary school enrollment of 2,287 students was housed in nine neighborhood schools. The junior high school enrollment of 846 students and the senior high school enrollment of 870 students were housed in two separate complexes. Governance of the research project school system was provided by a six-member board of education whose members were elected at large by voters of the district.

Administration in the research project school system was based on a central office concept and consisted of the superintendent, assistant superintendent for business, curriculum director, special education director, and two program coordinators. Building administration consisted of five elementary principals, a head principal and three assistant principals at the junior high school, and a head principal and two assistant principals at the senior high school.

There were 263 instructional staff members in the research project school system at the time of the study. Curriculum services were extended to students in the areas of mathematics, science, social studies, English/language arts, foreign language, physical education,

vocal music, instrumental music, and art. Special services were
provided by the district in the areas of speech/language, guidance,
special education, Chapter I, and vocational education.

The nine elementary schools were centered around the "neighbor-
hood schools" concept. Each of the schools was responsible for con-
ducting parent-teacher conferences at the building level in both the
first and second semesters of the school year. The time for those
conferences was established on a district-wide calendar. The first
conferences allowed time for all parents to visit with their children's
teachers. The second conference of the year, and the one used for
this study, was scheduled at either the request of the teacher or
the parent.

Research Study

The first step when beginning the project was to obtain per-
mission from the superintendent of the research project school system
to do the study in the school district. The superintendent granted
permission to conduct the study and selected the three elementary
schools where the data for the study were gathered (see Appendix C).
The superintendent's permission letter was also used as the basis for
meeting the requirement of the IRB application form to gain permission
from the University of Nebraska to use human resources in the study
(see Appendix C).

The next step involved a meeting with the principals of the
three identified schools. The purpose of the meeting was to explain

in depth the process to be used and to gain their suggestions and expertise regarding the project (see Appendix C). The major topic discussed was the method that would be used to identify the teacher sample. A list of selected teachers from the staff rosters was presented to the three principals, and they agreed to contact these teachers about participation in the project. From that original list, a total of nine teachers agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix C).

Initially, a letter of introduction and explanation was sent to the research group of teachers (see Appendix C). A meeting was scheduled with the principals and teachers to explain the project and the specifics for gathering data. Each participant was given the following:

1. Sample parent letter (see Appendix C)

2. Copy of the superintendent's letter (see Appendix C)

3. Audiotaping guidelines for the teacher (see Appendix C)

4. Parent questionnaire (see Appendix B)

5. Teacher questionnaire (see Appendix B)

6. Set of labeled audiotapes

Each teacher provided the researcher with a list of parents who would be attending this set of parent-teacher conferences. All of the conferences were held over a three-day period and occurred during the evening hours. Each parent received a letter of explanation (see Appendix C) prior to his or her scheduled conference. A total of 87 parents were contacted to participate in the project.

Forty-nine parents agreed to have their parent-teacher conferences taped and to complete the corresponding parent effectiveness questionnaire concerning the conference. Each teacher then received a follow-up letter (see Appendix C) to offer encouragement and appreciation before the beginning of the conferences.

The conferences were held on successive Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. Following the last conference on Wednesday evening, the audiotapes and the parent and teacher questionnaires were collected from all three schools.

During the next four days (Thursday through Sunday), the researcher, after selecting three tapes from each instructor (a total of 24), listened to each of the audiotapes and used a set of guidelines (see Appendix C) to identify specific points of interaction between the parent and the teacher. These incidents were coded with reference to the counter on the tape player in order to easily find each incident. In particular, incidents of decision making on the part of the teacher were recorded and noted. The cues on decision making revolved around planned decisions (goals established for the conference) and extemporaneous decisions (decisions made regarding parent feedback and questions). The researcher made notations to help describe each of the incidents identified for future review with teachers participating in the study.

On the Monday and Tuesday directly following the conferences, the researcher returned to the research project school system and conducted indepth interviews with the nine teachers in the sample

group. Two of the teachers team-taught and, therefore, the researcher conducted their interview as a team. These interviews were accomplished by cooperating with the research project school system to develop a plan that would create ample time to conduct the interviews. The researcher provided funding to hire substitute teachers for the days the interviews took place. This approach allowed approximately one and one-half hours of interview time for each teacher.

During the interviews, the various tapes were played back and questions about specific incidents from the conferences were answered. In addition, the teachers responded to specific questions. The questions were designed (see Appendix C) to gather additional reactions from the teachers. All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for later analysis.

Data Collection

The first step of the data collection involved audiotaping the 120 parent-teacher conferences that were identified from the parent contacts made prior to the scheduled conference. Each parent was notified by letter prior to the conference that the conference would be taped and the reasons why a record of the interaction that took place during the conference would be maintained. Each teacher was supplied with 60-minute tapes and required to tape one conference on each side of the tapes. The sides were numbered to help identify each conference. The teachers were asked to supply their own tape recorders and received specific directions regarding setting up and

recording the selected parent-teacher conferences. The tapes that were used were selected at the conclusion of the conferences. This helped protect against biases and over-emphasis on the part of the teachers, because they were unaware of which tapes were to be selected. This also allowed the researcher to limit the number of tapes to be analyzed and to maintain the time-line necessary to use the stimulated-recall interview approach described earlier in this chapter.

The second step in the data collection process was to give parents a questionnaire designed to allow them to assess the effectiveness of the conference. This questionnaire was consistent with the identified characteristics from the theoretical communication model and the related research. Only one questionnaire was filled out for each conference, and it was done on an individual basis.

The third step in the data collection process was to give a questionnaire to each teacher who facilitated the conference to assess the effectiveness of the parent-teacher conference. The questionnaire was consistent with the identified characteristics from the theoretical communication model and the related research. These characteristics were summarized at the conclusion of Chapter II.

The fourth step in the data collection process was to listen to the audiotapes from the parent-teacher conferences and analyze them according to the list of twelve identified characteristics from the theoretical communication model and the related research. These twelve characteristics are found in the categories of communication (sender, message, receiver, feedback), decision making (planned

decisions, explaining, extemporaneous decisions, questioning), and conferencing skills (planning, communication, management, follow-up). As the tapes were replayed, notations were made when the topic the teacher was discussing changed to another topic. Notations were also made on the tape analysis as to which parts of the conference were parent "talk" and which parts were teacher "talk." The researcher also noted which decisions that were made fell into the caetgories of planned or extemporaneous decisions. This decision making was further divided into teacher responses thet were either questioning or explanatory remarks.

The last step of data collection was the completion of the personal interviews with the teachers who participated in the study. The process of stimulated recall was used to determine why teachers made particular decisions during the conference, what they were thinking or assessing at the time, and what options they considered before they chose their final direction. Teachers were asked to share their particular thoughts as they prepared for this specific conference. They were then asked if they had a specific plan of action and/or topics in mind that they wanted to have covered during the conference. Finally, the teachers were asked to listen to particular audiotaped excerpts from the conference and respond to each of those situations regarding their comments to parents or the parent's comments to the teacher. All of these excerpts were identified as containing feedback characteristics from the communciation model.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was to listen to each of the selected tapes from the parent-teacher conferences. The analysis of the tapes included a recording of incidents that conformed to the identified communication characteristics based upon current research and the theoretical communication model. A comparison was also made of any pre-planning of topics to be discussed by the teacher and the actual topics discussed during the conference. Specific decision making and communication incidents during the conference were noted and marked as to their position on the audiotape. These specific incidents were the basis for questions during the follow-up interviews with the teachers involved in the research study. This step in the data analysis procedure was used to gather the information specifically related to Objective One, which required a determination of what kind of decision making occurred during the parent-teacher conference.

The responses on the teacher and parent questionnaires were then used to assess the effectiveness of the individual conferences that were used as the basis for the teacher interviews. This step in the data analysis was used to gather the information specifically related to Objective Two and Objective Three, both of which dealt with the assessment of the effectiveness of the communication and decision making that took place during the parent-teacher conference.

Objective Four was adddressed as part of the summary, conclusions, and recommendations chapter of this research effort. This

step involved the identification of a set of recommendations concerning the staff development program of activities aimed at improving the effectiveness of parent-teacher conferences.

The progression of the data analysis in this particular study was: (1) the raw data from all of the conferences, questionnaires, and interviews were collected; (2) the researcher referred to the related research and identified twelve major characteristics from the areas of communication, decision making, and parent-teacher conferencing as the basis for analyzing the data; (3) the data from each of the selected conferences were analyzed using the appropriate recording forms; and (4) summaries for each of the conference case studies were developed to report the data that had been collected.

The final step in the data analysis involved the researcher's development of the theoretical model for assessing the effectiveness of parent-teacher conferences. This model directly reflected the twelve characteristics identified by this reseracher from the review of literature reported in Chapter II.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The data that were collected and organized are reported in
this chapter in the following manner.

1. Raw data were first collected from individual project
teacher's conference tapes and the parent and teacher questionnaires
dealing with the effectiveness of teacher communciation during the
conferences.

2. The selected conference tapes were listened to and specific
incidents on the tapes were identified for further use in the inter-
view phase of the project. Specific questions were also developed
that would help the researcher gain additional data about the
selected conferences.

3. The researcher then conducted individual interviews
with the project teachers, who responded to questions about the
identified incidents on each conference tape. The teachers were
also asked specific questions about each conference at the time
of the interview. All additional raw data were collected and
recorded by the researcher during the interview process.

Each conference selected to be a part of the research
project was treated as a separate "case" for data analysis. The
following steps were followed for each conference in an effort to
insure similar analysis and treatment of the data:

1. Each conference tape was analyzed and labeled according to twelve specific characteristics of a parent-teacher conference. The twelve characteristics resulted from an accumulation and synthesis of the review of related research on the topics of communication, decision making, and conferencing skills. These characteristics made up the theoretical model that was the purpose of the study. The model was called the Parent-Conferencing Communication Model. The twelve characteristics used in the model were:

> Communication: Sender, Message, Receiver, and Feedback
>
> Decision Making: Questioning, Explaining, Planned Decisions, or Extemporaneous Decisions
>
> Conferencing Skills: Planning, Communication, Management, and Follow-up

2. The individual teacher interviews were then used to gather specifics about each of the selected conferences. During each interview, the following information was recorded for further analysis: (a) specific student information, (b) special student needs, attitude, and behaviors, (c) teacher plans for the conference (what the teachers wished to accomplish), (d) anxious feelings about the conference, (e) level of confidence about the conference, (f) personal analysis of the success of the conference, and (g) strategies or future goals for the student that were a direct result of this particular parent-teacher conference.

3. The results of the parent-teacher conference communications effectiveness questionnaires were recorded for each of the selected parent-teacher conferences for comparison of the teacher

and parent perceptions

In order to consistently report the information gathered during each individual conference, the following points were summarized:

1. General conference information regarding (a) attendance at the conference, (b) who requested the conference, (c) family information, (d) academic ability, (e) student attitude, (f) student behavior, and (g) special needs.

2. The information the teacher planned to share during the conference.

3. Specific evidence from the conference relating to communication (sender, message, receiver, feedback), decision making (planned, extemporaneous, questioning, explaining), and conferencing skills (planning, communication, management, follow-up). This evidence was identified for each category as well as the degree to which the characteristic was present.

4. The teacher's analysis of the success of the conference.

In order to report each case study, the above four points were integrated into a standard form. This form included (1) space to answer specific questions about the student, (2) space to identify specific goals for the conference, (3) a listing of the twelve characteristics identified in Chapter II, and (4) space to share the teacher's assessment of the conference.

Using the data from each conference, the researcher applied them to the twelve characteristics to see if they existed in the

context of the conference. This question was answered as yes or no.
If the answer were affirmative, the researcher made a judgment on
the quality of the presence of each characteristic. This quality
judgment was based upon the researcher's knowledge of the literature
review in the areas of communication, decision making, and confer-
encing skills, as well as the indepth analysis of each of the audio-
taped conferences and subsequent teacher interviews.

Case Study: One   Gender: Boy   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother and child
Who requested the conference: Mother
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Low average
Attitude: Low self-esteem
Behavior: Excellent
Special needs: Special reading class

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Strength of self-confidence in the academic areas

- Strength of leadership role on the playground

- Needs to continually focus on his playground leadership role

- Weakness in spelling words out of context

- Weakness in spelling for writing projects

- Weakness in the area of phonics

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Nineteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Ten examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	**Notes**		
Planned:	Four instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous:	Four instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	Two instances	Yes	
Explaining:	Four instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan-- contained six goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Twenty-nine examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goals were discussed Balance between parent/ teacher talk	Yes	
Follow-up:	Better understanding of student health issues Better understanding and use of home reading goals	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed this conference as being very successful. She had planned to tell the parent about the improvements that had been observed and how important it was to feel good about his academic achievements at school. He certainly had a lot of strengths beside being good at athletic competition.

Case Study: Two   Gender: Girl   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Mother
Family information: Mother was alone/father was in prison
Academic ability: Very high
Attitude: Very competitive
Behavior: Not a distraction
Special needs: Resolve the need for continued skill work

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

-   Slight improvement in use of her time

-   Works in the enrichment group in math

-   Preoccupation with unrelated school topics

-   Roller coaster (much care goes in to some work, then exhibits none at all)

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication Notes		
Sender/Message Twenty examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback Eighteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous: Two instances	Yes	
Questioning: Two instances	Yes	
Explaining: Four instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan-- contained four goals	Yes	+
Communication: Thirty-eight examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent/teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up: Contact resource people to serve as help in dealing with the issue of compulsiveness	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher's inability to offer any suggestions on ways to change compulsive behavior at home or school left her uncomfortable and with a feeling there were some unanswered loose ends. The comfortable feeling came when the teacher realized she and the parent were both working toward solving the same student problem.

Case Study: Three   Gender: Boy   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother and father
Who requested the conference: Parents
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Very strong
Attitude: Low self-concept/low self-esteem
Behavior: Quick tempered
Special needs: Counseling assistance

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Strength of creativity

- Strength of developing artistic creations

- Noticeable increase in class discussion participation

- Rushes through work--careless

- Concerned about the current after-school care arrangement

- Very low self-esteem

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Eighteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Eleven examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making <u>Notes</u>		
Planned: Six instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous: One instance	Yes	
Questioning: Two instances	Yes	
Explaining: Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan-- six goals	Yes	+
Communication: Twenty-nine examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Planned goals were discussed Balance between parent/ teacher talk	Yes	
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

<u>Conclusions</u> - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed this conference as being successful. The teacher had two thoughts as the conference ended: (1) if they would really pursue the sport of wrestling as an avenue to build self-confidence for the boy, and (2) if anything would really change with the current baby-sitting arrangement.

Case Study: Four   Gender: Girl   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Mother
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: High average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Very good
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- None

-

-

-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication **Notes**		
Sender/Message Twenty-six examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback Eight examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making _Notes_		
Planned: One instance	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Six instances	Yes	+
Questioning: One instance	Yes	
Explaining: Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had no written goals	No	
Communication: Thirty-four examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Teacher-talk dominated the conference	Yes	
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher indicated that she went into the conference without a plan because the parent had requested the conference. The teacher did admit that she became defensive toward the parent because she was not prepared with the specific responses needed in parts of the discussion.

Case Study: Five   Gender: Girl   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Mother (Aunt)
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Child was being raised by her aunt
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Good (sometimes an excessive talker)
Special needs: Individual attention

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Recently removed student from special reading class

- Moved student into another reading group

- Student needs to exhibit patience regarding the change in reading groups
-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Nineteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Eleven examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: One instance	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning: One instance	Yes	
Explaining: Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had three written goals	Yes	
Communication: Thirty examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Planned goals were discussed Balance of teacher/parent talk	Yes	
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

No information was available regarding the teacher's asssessment of the conference.

Case Study: Six   Gender: Boy   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Mother and father
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Low average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Sometimes silly/immature
Special needs: Extra attention/caring

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Student is careless in his work

- Student seems to exhibit a lot of surface learning

- Student has been changed to a new reading group

- Student has been removed from special reading class

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Nineteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Eighteen examples of Parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	**Notes**		
Planned:	One instance	Yes	
Extemporaneous:	Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	No instances	No	
Explaining:	Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had four written goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Thirty-seven examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Planned goals were discussed Balance of teacher/ parent talk	Yes	+
Follow-up:	The parent/teacher together would encourage a better quality of work from the student and would develop strategies together toward achieving the goal	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher felt the parents had been told what they needed to hear. The difficulty was knowing whether or not the parents fully understood what had been shared.

Case Study: Seven   Gender: Boy   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother (grandmother - guardian)

Who requested the conference: Teacher

Family information: Grandmother serves as guardian

Academic ability: Average

Attitude: Fair

Behavior: Problems with inappropriate touching

Special needs: Counseling

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Discuss the student's behavior of inappropriate touching of other students in class
-
-
-
-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Twenty-four examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Nine examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT

		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	**Notes**		
Planned:	One instance	Yes	
Extemporaneous:	Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	Four instances	Yes	+
Explaining:	Three instances	Yes	
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan-- contained one goal	Yes	
Communication:	Twenty-nine examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goal was discussed More teacher talk than parent talk	Yes	
Follow-up:	The teacher developed a better understanding of the need to document the behaviors and meet regularly with the student's counselor	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as helping her to find out information she needed to know about the student's "home" situation. She was also interested and concerned about the amount of time the student was out of class; this was a result of the student being requested to meet with Social Services.

Case Study: Eight   Gender: Girl   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Mother
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Excellent
Behavior: Good
Special needs: Special area reading

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- None

-

-

-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Twenty-one examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Ten examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	*Notes*		
Planned:	One instance	Yes	
Extemporaneous:	Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	One instance	Yes	
Explaining:	Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had no written goals	No	
Communication:	Thirty-one examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Teacher talk dominated the conference	No	
Follow-up:	Make sure that this student's records were all available and up-to-date for the family move to Utah	Yes	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being successful.

Case Study: Nine   Gender: Girl   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Excellent
Attitude: Positive
Behavior: Excellent
Special needs: Student needs to be challenged

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Explanation of the report card

- Discuss the parent's perception of how well the student
  is being challenged

-

-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Eighteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Ten examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making — Notes		
Planned: Two instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Four instances	Yes	+
Questioning: No instances	No	
Explaining: Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan that contained two goals	Yes	
Communication: Twenty-eight examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent/ teacher talk	Yes	
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being successful because she accomplished her planned goals. Her frustration with the conference resulted from receiving a "lot of additional information" from the parent.

Case Study: Ten   Gender: Girl   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Father
Who requested the conference: Father
Family information: Non-traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Good
Special needs: Work on immature behaviors

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Ask the parent if he had any specific questions

- Discuss the student's academic progress

- Discuss the student's strengths

- Discuss the student's weaknesses (areas for improvement)

- Share the Ticket In/Ticket Out Project

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Fourteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Three examples of parent feedback	No	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	Notes		
Planned:	Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous:	No instances	No	
Questioning:	One instance	Yes	
Explaining:	Four instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained five goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Seventeen examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	
Management:	Goals were discussed More teacher talk than parent talk	No	
Follow-up:	No strategies were identified	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed this conference as being successful based upon the "happy" reactions and feelings of the parent.

Case Study: Eleven   Gender: Boy   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Father
Who requested the conference: Parents
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: High
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Good
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Ask the parent if he had any specific questions

- Reinforce the student's excellent progress

- Encourage the student to always do excellent work

- Discuss the students' need to "slow down" on the completion of some assignments
- Explain the Ticket In/Ticket Out Project

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Eight examples of teacher messages	Yes	
Receiver/Feedback	Thirteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	<u>Notes</u>		
Planned:	Four instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous:	One instance	Yes	
Questioning:	One instance	Yes	
Explaining:	Four instancse	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained five goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Twenty-one examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	
Management:	Goals were discussed More parent than teacher talk	No	
Follow-up:	The teacher followed through the next day by visiting with the student and offering encouragement to slow down on assignments.	Yes	+

<u>Conclusions</u> - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher's assessment of the conference was that it was successful and the parent was not surprised with any of the information presented.

Case Study: Twelve   Gender: Boy   Grade: One

Who attended the conference: Father
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Non-traditional
Academic ability: Learning disability
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Poor
Special needs: Love and understanding

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Ask the parent if he had any specific questions

- Discuss the student's specific strengths

- Discuss the student's specific weaknesses

- Discuss the student's "learning differences"

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Seventeen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Eight examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making <u>Notes</u>		
Planned: Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous: Two instances	Yes	
Questioning: One instance	Yes	
Explaining: Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained four goals	Yes	+
Communication: Twenty-five examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed More teacher than parent talk	No	
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

<u>Conclusions</u> - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher's assessment of the conference was that it was successful; however, the teacher was still unsure of what specific changes the conference would produce in the child's behavior or learning exper- iences.

Case Study: Thirteen Gender: Girl Grade: Four

Who attended the conference: Father and stepmother
Who requested the conference: Parents
Family information: Non-traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Healthy
Behavior: Good
Special needs: Special area reading

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Concerned about the student's mental health

- Student puts forth an excellent effort

- Student is very sensitive

- Student's concern about the relationship with her stepmother

- No major concern about the student's academics

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Sixteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Thirteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making *Notes*		
Planned: Two instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Three instances	Yes	
Questioning: No instances	No	
Explaining: Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained five goals	Yes	+
Communication: Twenty-nine examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher rated this conference as moderately successful. The teacher indicated that the negative feelings between the student and the stepmother still seemed to exist and that positive reinforcement for the student was still very much needed and quite essential.

Case Study: Fourteen Gender: Girl   Grade: Four

Who attended the conference: Mother and father

Who requested the conference: Parents

Family information: Traditional

Academic ability: Very low

Attitude: Good

Behavior: Good

Special needs: Resource room for all subjects

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Inform the parents about the child's improvement in the area of spelling
- Concern about handling the science topics in the regular classroom
-
-
-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication Notes		
Sender/Message Twenty-one examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback Fourteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: Two instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Four instances	Yes	+
Questioning: One instance	Yes	
Explaining: Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained two goals	Yes	
Communication: Thirty-five examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up: No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher felt that the conference may have ended too quickly. The conference allowed the teacher to gather additional insight regarding the thoughts and expectations of the parents. In both cases, the pressure being applied by the parents may be a real hindrance to the child.

Case Study: Fifteen   Gender: Girl   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Above average
Attitude: Excellent
Behavior: Excellent
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Establish rapport with the parent concerning the first-time meeting
- Talk to the parent about the student's shy behavior

- Discuss the student's progress relating to the academic subjects
-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Eighteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Twelve examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	**Notes**		
Planned:	Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous:	Two instances	Yes	
Questioning:	One instance	Yes	
Explaining:	Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained three goals	Yes	
Communication:	Thirty examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up:	No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being successful. The teacher had a better understanding of the student's shy behaviors--very much like her mother. The teacher had learned some valuable information about the student's background and would not be surprised or distressed if the student did not open up to her as a teacher.

Case Study: Sixteen   Gender: Boy   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother/boy
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Non-traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Excellent
Behavior: Good in a controlled situation
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Share the results of the teacher/student individual pre-
  conference
- Reading and math academic progress

- Share the student's positive attitude toward school

- Concern for the child's self-esteem

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Fifteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Thirteen examples of parent/student feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous: One instance	Yes	
Questioning: No instances	No	
Explaining: Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained four goals	Yes	+
Communication: Twenty-eight examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up: This conference reinforced for the teacher the strategy of meeting with the student prior to the conference. The teacher also felt that the strategies dealing with student's self-esteem should also continue.	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being very successful and felt very positive about the results at the conclusion of the session. The conference left the teacher with the feeling that "someone was really listening.

Case Study: Seventeen Gender: Girl Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Father
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Low average
Attitude: Excellent
Behavior: Excellent
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Discuss the goals that were the products of the individual teacher-student conference
- Discuss the student's progress in reading

- Discuss the student's progress in math in relation to last year
-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Seventeen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Eight examples of parent/student feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		
	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: Four instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous: Two instances	Yes	
Questioning: Two instances	Yes	
Explaining: Four instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained three goals	Yes	
Communication: Twenty-five examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed More teacher than parent talk	No	
Follow-up: The teacher felt that the strategy of involving students in the conference was reinforced. A second follow-up was the assessment of communciation with father at conference time.	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher's assessment of the conference was that it was successful. The teacher felt it was very important to continue stressing improvement in math and reinforcing the progress in this area. The teacher felt it was good, however, that everyone realized this subject area may very well always be a challenge for this student.

Case Study: Eighteen   Gender: Boy   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Easily influenced
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Review the process used for student goal setting in the class-
  room
- Seek information concerning the current family situation and
  its effect upon the student
-

-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Communication	Notes		
Sender/Message	Eighteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Fifteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making Notes		
Planned: Two instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous: Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning: Two instances	Yes	
Explaining: Five instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills		
Planning: Teacher had a written plan; contained two goals	Yes	
Communication: Thirty-three examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management: Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up: The only strategy developed was to evaluate the student's handwriting and give feedback to the student	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher's assessment of the conference was that it was successful.

Case Study: Nineteen Gender: Boy   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Easily influenced
Special needs: None

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Indicate the use of attention control

- Indicate the use of long-term/short-term goals

- Better understanding of the current family situation

-

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Eighteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Nine examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	**Notes**		
Planned:	Three instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous:	Four instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	One instance	Yes	
Explaining:	Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained three goals	Yes	
Communication:	Twenty-seven examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goals were discussed More teacher talk than parent talk	No	
Follow-up:	No strategies were established	No	

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed this conference as being successful.

Case Study: Twenty   Gender: Boy   Grade: Three

Who attended the conference: Mother
Who requested the conference: Teacher
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: Average
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Very good
Special needs: Has headaches/stomachaches before coming to school

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:

- Concern about his handwriting--especially neatness

- Concern about his inability to play with other children on the playground
- Indicate the use of attention control

- Indicate the use of long-term/short-term goals

-

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Fifteen examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Fifteen examples of parent feedback	Yes	+

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	*Notes*		
Planned:	Three instances	Yes	
Extemporaneous:	Five instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	Two instances	Yes	
Explaining:	Six instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained four goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Thirty examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goals were discussed Balance between parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Follow-up:	Need to mentor his continual headaches/stomachaches. Could be for attention or some other problem yet to be identified.	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being successful.

Case Study: Twenty-one   Gender: Boy   Grade: Two

Who attended the conference: Mother and father
Who requested the conference: Parents
Family information: Traditional
Academic ability: High
Attitude: Good
Behavior: Good
Special needs: Speech

Teacher planned the following information for the conference:
- Very helpful in the classroom

- Very kind to others

- Good reader--top reading group

- Good creative writing skills

- Good addition to the class since moving here in October

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT			
Communication	Notes	Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Sender/Message	Twenty-two examples of teacher messages	Yes	+
Receiver/Feedback	Six examples of parent feedback	Yes	

PARENT-CONFERENCING COMMUNICATION MODEL ASSESSMENT		Evident Yes/No	Quality +
Decision Making	Notes		
Planned:	Five instances	Yes	+
Extemporaneous;	Four instances	Yes	+
Questioning:	No instances	No	
Explaining:	Nine instances	Yes	+
Conferencing Skills			
Planning:	Teacher had a written plan; contained five goals	Yes	+
Communication:	Twenty-eight examples of parent and teacher talk	Yes	+
Management:	Goals were discussed More teacher than parent talk	No	
Follow-up:	Continue to monitor his hurried work habits and encourage him to slow down.	Yes	+

Conclusions - Teacher Assessment of the Conference

The teacher assessed the conference as being very successful and very positive.

Case Number		Sender/ Message	Receiver/ Feedback	Planned Decisions	Extemporaneous Decisions	Questioning	Explaining	Planning	Communication	Management	Follow-up
1	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+		+	+		+	+	+		+
2	Yes/No	Y	ï	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+
3	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+		+			+	+	+		
4	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+			+		+		+		
5	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+			+		+		+		
6	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+
7	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+			+	+			+		+
8	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
	Quality (+)	+			+		+		+		
9	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+			+		+		+		
10	Yes/No	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Quality (+)	+		+			+	+			
11	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	Quality (+)		+	+			+	+			+
12	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Quality (+)	+		+			+	+	+		

FIGURE 8

Evidence of Specific Characteristics in
Parent-Teacher Conferences

Case Number		Sender/ Message	Receiver/ Feedback	Planned Decisions	Extemporaenous Decisions	Questioning	Explaining	Planning	Communication	Management	Follow-up
13	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+	+				+	+	+	+	
14	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+	+		+		+		+	+	
15	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Quality (+)	+	+	+			+		+	+	
16	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+
17	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	Quality (+)	+		+			+		+		+
18	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+	+		+		+		+	+	+
19	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Quality (+)	+			+		+		+		
20	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Quality (+)	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+
21	Yes/No	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	Quality	+		+	+		+	+	+		+
	Evident totals	21	20	21	20	16	21	19	21	14	11
	Quality totals	20	9	10	12	1	20	11	19	8	10

FIGURE 8 (continued)

The teachers and parents who participated in the study were given questionnaires designed to allow them to assess the effectiveness of the individual conferences used as the basis for the teacher interviews. This step in the data collection was used to gather the information specifically related to Objectives Two and Three, both of which dealt with the assessment of the effectiveness of the communciation and decision making that took place during the parent-teacher conference.

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the teachers and parents rated the effectiveness of the conferences as good or excellent. From the total of 11 questions asked on the teacher questionnaire concerning the effectiveness of the parent-teacher conference, 123 or 53.2 percent of the responses for the 21 parent-teacher conferences studied rated the effectiveness as excellent; 96 responses or 41.6 percent rated the conferences as good. Similar responses were seen from the parent questionnaries. With regard to the 21 parent-teacher conferences studied, a total of 137 responses or 62.4 percent for the 11 questions asked in the parent questionnaire rated the parent-teacher conferences as excellent; 74 responses or 33.6 percent rated the parent-teacher conferences as good.

From the total of 21 cases, five cases were identified (11, 12, 16, 18, and 20) where both the parent and teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten or more times. Also, eight cases were identified (2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, and 17) where neither the parent nor the teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten or more times. The importance of these findings will be discussed in Chapter V.

TABLE 1

Summary of Responses for the Parent and Teacher
Effectiveness Questionnaires

Case Study	Teacher				Parent			
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1			1	10 (*)			11	
2 (-)		1	7	3	No Answer			
3 (-)			8	3	1	8	2	
4		4	7					11 (#)
5			7	4				11 (#)
6 (-)		4	7				5	6
7			3	8				11 (#)
8 (-)			5	6			11	
9 (-)		1	4	6			11	
10				11 (*)			11	
11 (+)				11 (*)				11 (#)
12 (+)				11 (*)				11 (#)
13		1	8	2				11 (#)
14 (-)		1	8	2	3	5	3	
15 (-)			11		5	4	2	
16 (+)				11 (*)			1	10 (#)
17 (-)			11				4	7
18 (+)			1	10 (*)				11 (#)
19			1	10 (*)			3	8
20 (+)				11 (*)				11 (#)
21			7	4				11 (#)
Total		12	96	123	9		74	137
Percent		5.2	41.6	53.2	4.0		33.6	62.4

Key: (+) Case studies where both the parent and the teacher rated
the conference in the excellent category ten or more times.

(-) Case studies where neither the parent nor the teacher rated
the conference in the excellent category ten or more times.

(*) Case studies where only the teacher rated the conference in
the excellent category ten or more times.

(#) Case studies where only the parent rated the conference in
excellent category ten or more times.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Many teachers and perhaps an equal number of parents approach the parent-teacher conference season with trepidation, nervousness, insecurity, and dread. This need not be the case. Parents and teachers can work together, and the conferences can be both productive and worthwhile experiences. In fact, unless parents and teachers work together, the children are likely to lose, for the cooperative enterprise of modern education is predicated on partnership between both parties. Parent conferences need to be based on give and take, confidence, and cooperation (McLoughlin, 1987).

Although theoretical models that describe communication between individuals are available, there is no model that describes teacher planning and decision making relative to parent-teacher conferences, the communication that develops and takes place during the conference, and how basic conferencing skills can enhance the areas of communication and decision making.

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical model that described teacher thoughts and decision-making processes that occurred while the teacher was planning for the parent-teacher conference as well as conducting conferences. The data presented in the findings and conclusions led to the creation of the theoretical model.

Findings

Objective One

To determine, through the analysis of the audiotaped parent-teacher conferences, the type and/or kind of teacher decision making that occurs during this two-way communication.

In the 21 case studies, teachers exhibited the use of planned decisions, and in 20 case studies, teachers exhibited the use of extemporaneous decisions. When the teacher exhibited either a planned or extemporaneous decision during the conference, the response was in the form of an explanation or a question. The quality of "explaining" as a technqiue was apparent in all cases of planned and extemporaneous decisions. "Questioning" as a technique was apparent in 16 of the 21 cases. The largest discrepancy was in the quality exhibited by the teachers in the techniques of "explaining" and "questioning." Twenty of the teachers showed a high degree of success when using the "explaining" technique, while in only one case was "questioning" used to a high degree of success.

Objective Two

To determine individual teachers' assessments of their effectiveness as a communicator and decision maker during a parent-teacher conference.

Twenty-one of the case studies produced information from the teachers regarding their assessment of the conference. A summary of the effectiveness questionnaire responses was given in Table 1 (see Chapter IV). From the total of 11 questions asked on the teacher questionnaire

concerning the effectiveness of the parent-teacher conference, 123 or 53.2 percent of the responses for the 21 conferences rated the effectiveness as excellent; 96 responses or 41.6 percent rated them as good; and 12 responses or 5.2 percent rated them as fair. No responses were recorded in the poor category. Of the 21 cases, ten of them had ratings in the excellent category ten or more times, while the other 11 cases produced ratings in the excellent category less than 10 times.

Objective Three

To determine individual parent assessments of a teacher's effectiveness as a communication and decision maker during a parent-teacher conference.

Twenty of the case studies produced information from the parents regarding their assessment of the teachers during the parent-teacher conference (see Table 1, Chapter IV). From the total of 11 questions on the parent questionnaire, 137 responses or 62.4 percent rated the conferences as excellent; 74 or 33.6 percent rated them as good; and nine or 4.0 percent rated them as fair. No responses were reported in the poor category. Of the 21 cases, eight had parent ratings in the excellent category ten or more times, while the other 13 cases produced ratings in the excellent cateogry less than ten times.

Hypothesis One

Teachers who are more effective communicators will make more decisions that conform to a theoretical decision-making model during parent-teacher conferences and cover a wider variety of appropriate topics than teachers who are less effective communnciators.

Five case studies were identified where both the parent and
the teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten or more
times on the 11 responses given on the questionnaires. To determine
the degree to which these conferences fit the communication model
better than other conferences, the researcher selected eight other
cases whether neither the parent nor teacher classified the conference
as excellent ten or more times. In comparing the feedback variable,
the researcher found the decision-making characteristics from the
Parent-Conferencing Communication Model (see Figure 9) were evident in
all five cases concerning both planned and extemporaneous decisions.
The group of conferences was identified as those conferences where
communication between parents and teachers was most effective. Next,
eight cases were identified where neither the parent nor the teacher
rated the conference in the excellent category ten or more times. This
group of conferences was identified as the conferences where communica-
tion between parents and teachers was least effective. The decision-
making characteristics from the communication model were evident in
all eight cases concerning both planned and extemporaneous decisions.
This comparison indicated no difference between conferences rated as
possessing effective communication qualities relative to the use of
planned and extemporaneous decisions and conferences rated as possess-
ing less effective communication qualities relative to the use of
planned and extemporaneous decisions. According to the data from
the study, planned and extemporaneous decisions existed in all case
studies. The quality of the decisions is another matter for discussion

and possible additional research. The quality issue concerning the
lack of use of questioning techniques by teachers in relation to the
abundance of explanation techniques used by teachers is addressed
below in the section on Objective One.

Hypothesis Two

Teachers who are more effective communicators will exhibit
conference behaviors that conform more closely to a theoretical
model of the communication process and specifically make greater use
of the feedback element than teachers who are less effective communi-
cators.

Five case studies were identified where both the parent and
the teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten or
more times. To determine the degree to which these conferences fit the
communication model better than other conferences the researcher
selected eight other cases where neither party classified the confer-
ence in the excellent category ten or more times. In comparing the
feedback variable, the researcher found the average number of parent-
talk (feedback) instances in the five cases where both the parent
and the teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten
or more times was 12.8. In the eight cases where neither the parent
nor the teacher rated the conference in the excellent category ten or
more times, the average number of parent-talk (feedback) instances was
12.6. This comparison indicated no difference between teachers' use of
the feedback element evident in conferences rated as excellent and

those conferences with lower ratings. The use of the feedback technique, as identified in the model, did not affect the rating parents or teachers gave the conference.

Objective Four

To develop a set of recommendations for a comprehensive staff development program based upon effective communciation techniques and the decision-making process.

The objective encompassed the development of the model, as described earlier. The model is composed of the 12 characteristics found in the literature regarding communication (sender, receiver, message, feedback), teacher decision making (planned, extemporaneous, questioning, explaining), and conferencing skills (planning, communication, management, follow-up) (see Figure 9). Although the summative ratings of the conferences by parents and teachers were not correlated with the use of the effective communication process in the study, principles derived from the literature form a model for parent-teacher conferences.

The following staff development guidelines come directly from the model shown in Figure 9. This staff development approach will closely resemble the approach used when focusing on the improvement of of instruction and will be incorporated into inservice sessions prior to and following scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

1. Steps will be taken to encourage teachers to increase their knowledge and application of the 12 characteristics derived from the research literature and displayed in Figure 9. The literature review will be summarized in a set of findings for teachers to study.
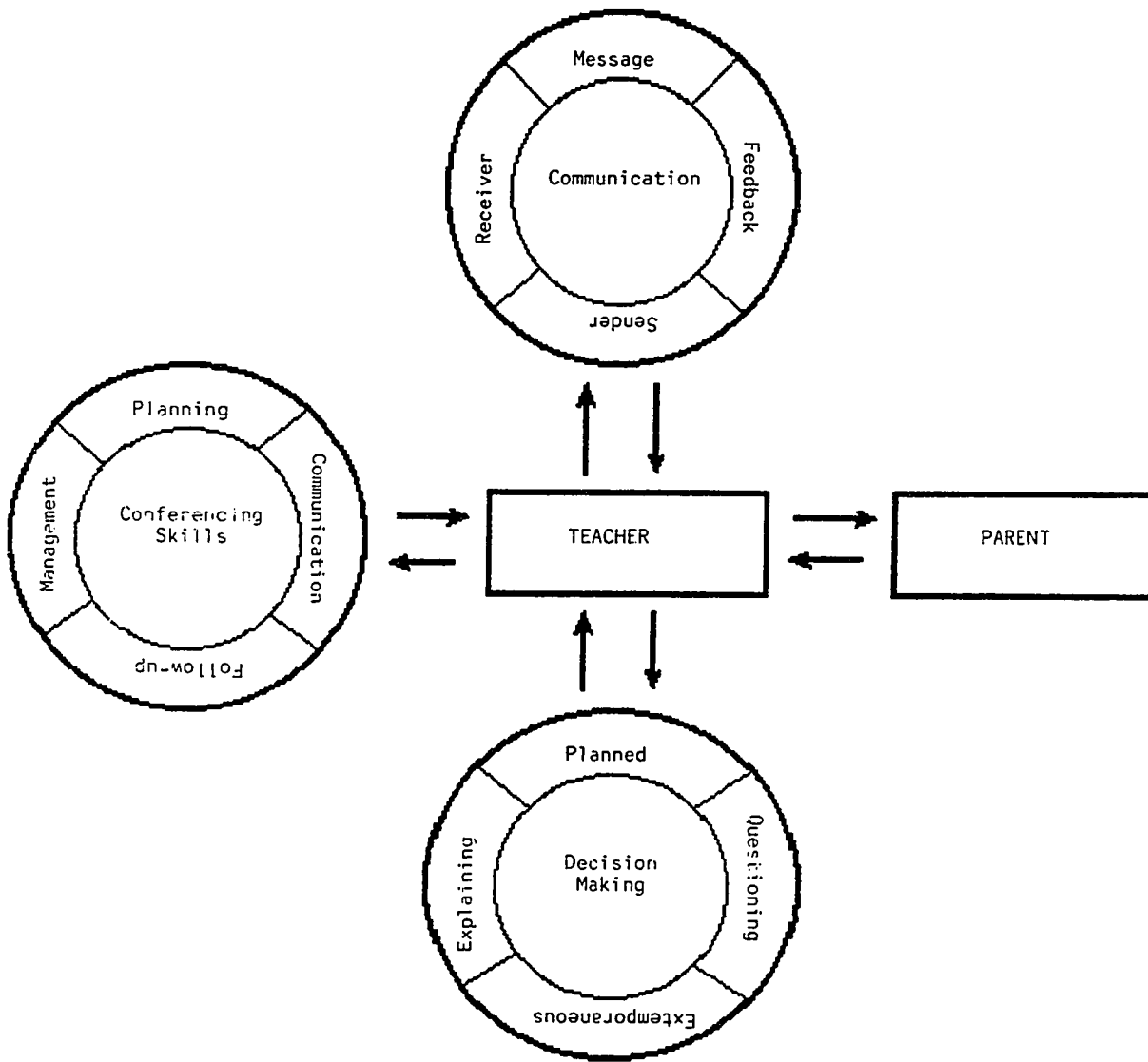
FIGURE 9

Parent-Conferencing Communication Model

2. Several actual parent-teacher conferences will be audio-taped or videotaped. These cases, like the cases used in this research project, will become the sources for the teachers to use in gaining an understanding of the characteristics of the Parent-Conferencing Communication Model and will provide the opportunity to identify the characteristics while critiquing a parent-teacher conference.

3. The tapes will be analyzed using the 12 characteristics of the model. This analysis will allow the teacher the opportunity to identify the 12 characteristics from actual conferences and recognize areas for improvement. Teachers could exercise an option of teaming with a peer and analyzing each other's tapes. This use of peer-analysis, to gain a different perspective concerning particular conferencing skills, will lead to a greater understanding of parent-teacher conferencing characteristics.

Conclusions

As can be seen from the data collected in this research project and the related literature review, the 12 characteristics identified to be part of the Parent-Conferencing Communication Model are integral components of a parent-teacher conference. The characteristics existed and could be identified in each case study. The data revealed that the specific area of questioning on the part of the teacher regarding decision making was a little-used principle during the parent-teacher conferences. One might assume this is true because a teacher is conditioned to be an "explainer" and not a "questioner." The data

also revealed that the teachers in the study did not make good use of the follow-up characteristics in the model. The teachers planned the conference, shared and explained observations and ideas, and discussed concerns and areas that needed improvement; however, the teachers somehow fell short of making plans for improvement at the end of the conference. In the staff development plan, the study showed teachers need the greatest help to use questioning techniques and follow-up on strategies designed in the conference.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research could be centered around the following topics:

1. A study involving the effects of staff development training on teachers and their conferencing skills. The study could center around a group of teachers and a comparison of their pre-training skills in relation to their knowledge and application of conferencing skills following the inservice sessions.

2. Indepth research of the parent's role regarding parent-teacher conferences and, specifically, their needs before, during, and after the parent-teacher conference. Gathering specific information from the parents who participate in the conferences could be very beneficial when attempting to improve the teacher's conferencing skills.

3. Follow-up research to increase a teacher's knowledge and application of the twelve characteristics identified in this research study as the intergral parts of the Parent-Conferencing Communication Model.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Auten, A. (1981, December). Effective parent teacher conferences. The Reading Teacher, 35(3), 358-361.

Babcock, C. M. (1952, May). A dynamic theory of communications. The Journal of Communication, 2(1), 64-68.

Bailard, V., & Strong, R. (1964). Parent-teacher conferences. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Barda, W. R. (1971, May). Parent conferences--guidelines for the counselor. The Clearing House, 45(9), 520-522.

Barren, B. G., & Colvin, J. M. (1986). Teacher talk to parents Education, 105(1), 76-78.

Beale, A. V. (1985, Janaury). Toward more effective school involvement. The Clearing House, 58, 213-215.

Beals, H. W. (1973). Parent-teacher conferences as perceived by parents in a sampling of public elementary schools in Fairfax County Virginia. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University.

Becker, H. J., & Epstein, J. L. (1981, February). Teacher practices and judgments. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University.

Bedwell, L. E., Hunt, G. H., Touzel, T. J., & Wiseman, D. G. (1984). Effective teaching--preparation and implementation. Springfield, Illinois: Thomas Books.

Berclay, J. G. (1977). Parent involvement in the schools. Washington, D.C. National Education Association.

Birnie, B. (1980, March). Working with parents. Instructor, 52-58.

Bjorklund, G., & Burger, C. (1987, January). Making conferences work. Young Children, 26-31.

Black, K. N. (1979, Spring). The teacher and the parent conference. Contemporary Education, 50(3), 162-165.

Blase, J. J. (1987, March/April). The politics of teaching: The teacher-parent relationship and the dynamics of diplomacy. Journal of Teacher Education, 53-60.

Bloom, B. S. (1976). Human characteristics and school learning. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Comapny.

Borgstrom, B. A. (1986). Evaluating parent-teacher conferences: An exploratory study of parent responses using a pre- and post-assessment design. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado.

Bortner, D. M. (1972). Public relations for public schools. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company.

Bradley, R. C. (1971). Parent-teacher interviews--a modern concept or oral reporting. Wolfe City, Texas: University Press.

Canady, R. L., & Seyforth, J. T. (1972). How parent-teacher conferences build partnerships. Phi Delta Kappan Fastback, 132.

Carberry, H. H. (1975, January/February). Parent-teacher conferences. Today's Education, 67-69.

Carlson, J., & Hillman, B. (1975, March). Facilitating parent-teacher conferences. The School Counselor, 243-249.

Cattermole, J., & Robinson, N. (1989). Effective home/school communication--from the parent's perspective. Phi Delta Kappan, 48-50.

Cherry, C. (1982). On human communication: A review, a survey, and a criticism. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Chilman, C. S. (1971, December). Some angles on parent-teacher learning. Childhood Education, 119-125.

Ciscell, R. (1990, January). How to prepare for a conference with angry parents. Middle School Journal, 46-47.

Clark, C. M., & Peterson, P. L. (1988). Teacher stimulated recall of interactive decisions. Stanford, California: Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching.

Crable, R. E. (1979). Using communication. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Craft, M., Raynor, J., & Cohen, L. (1972). Linking home and school. London: Longman Group Limited.

Dance, F. E. X., & Larson, C. E. (1976). The functions of human communication--a theoretical approach. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Davis, D. H., & Davis, D. M. (1981, April/May). Managing parent-teacher conferences. Today's Education, 46-50.

DeBruyn, R. L. (1984, November). Prerequisites for parent conferences. The Master Teacher, 6(9), 1-5.

Demos, E. S. (1986, Winter). The reading conference: Questions, information, activities, and feedback. Reading Horizons, 26(2), 105-111.

Dunkin, M. J., & Biddle, B. J. (1974). The study of teaching. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, Inc.

Eggleston, J. (1979). Teacher decision-making in the classroom. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Epstein, J. L. (1983, October). Effects on parents of teacher practices of parent involvement. Baltimore, Maryland; Johns Hopkins University.

Federsen, J. (1972, November). Establishing an effective parent-teacher communication system. Childhood Education, 49(2), 75-79.

Filipezak, J. (1977, April). Parental involvement in the schools: Towards what end? Silver Springs, Maryland: Institute for Behavioral Research.

Forbes, J. L. (1980, March). Working with parents--eight teachers show how they succeed. Instructor, 52-58.

Friedman, P. G. (1980). Communicating in conferences: Parent-teacher-student interaction. Falls Church, Virginia; Speech Communication Association.

Fuery, C. (1985, February). Teacher public relations with parents. Momentum, 46-47.

Gage, N. L. (1964). The psychology of teaching methods--seventy fifth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

Garcia, A. G. (1973). Communication and working with parents. San Francisco: Far West Lab for Educational Research and Development.

Gelfer, J. I., & Perkins, P. G. (1987, October). Effective communication with parents. Childhood Education, 19-22.

Gerbner, G. (1966, June). On defining communication: Still another view. The Journal of Communication, 16(2), 99-103.

Gibb, J. R. (1961, September). Defensive communication. The Journal of Communication, 11(3), 141-148.

Goodacre, E. (1970). School and home. London: The National Foundation for Educational Research.

Granowsky, A., & others (1977, November). How to put parents on your classroom team. Instructor, 54-62.

Grant, C. A. (1979). Community participation in education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Harris, M. M. (1983, October). A resource module to develop elementary pre-service teacher competency in communicating with parents and other adults. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236 141)

Heffernan, H., & Todd, V. E. (1969). Elementary teachers guide to working with parents. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company, Inc.

Heinrich, L. B. (1985, October). Parent-teacher conferences--include the student, please. Learning, 87.

Henderson, A. T., Manburger, C. L., & Ooms, T. (1986). Beyond the bake sale. Washington: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henniger, M. L. (1977). Building parent/teacher relationships through written communication. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211 215)

Herberg, G. R. (1966). Handbook on parent conference reporting. Fredericksburg, Texas: Fredericksburg Independent School District.

Hymes, J. L. J. (1953). Effective home-school relations. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Jenkins-Friedman, R., & Fire, M. J. (1984, February). A useful framework for parent-teacher contacts. Roeper Review, 155-158.

Jones, J. R. (1965). Parent-teacher conferences as a reporting technique. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Joyce, B. (1978-1979, Winter). Toward a theory of information processing in teaching. Educational Research Quarterly, 13(4), 66-71.

Kander, J. R., & Horn, S. (1978, Spring). Parent-teacher conferences: How Is as Important as What. Catalyst for Change, 7(3), 18-20.

Kindred, L. W., Babin, D., & Gallagher, D. R. (1984). The school and community relations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Knox, L., & Candalaria, C. (1987, September). How to get the most of parent-teacher conferences. Learning, 16(2), 60-61.

Kroth, R. L. (1975). Communicating with parents of exceptional children. Denver, Colorado: Love Publishing Company.

Keursten, J. (1984, November). Ten things that parents wish teachers would do. PTA Today, 4-5.

Kukulka, D. W. (1987). Reducing occupational stress: Can teachers' professional attitudes and self-esteem be improved by training them to more effectively meet the parents of their students at parent-teacher conferences. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina.

Larrick, N. (1976, January). From "hands off" to "parents we need you!" Childhood Education, 52(3), 134-137.

Larson, C. U. (1976). Communication: Everday encounters. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

Lichter, P. (1976, Winter). Communication with parents: It begins with listening. Teaching Exceptional Children, 8, 66-71.

Lindle, J. C. (1989, October). What do parents want from principals and teachers? Educational Leadership, 12-14.

Littleton, M. (1985, Fall). Effective parent-teacher conferences. Catalyst, 12-14.

Long, A. (1976, September-October). Easing the stress of parent-teacher conferences. Today's Education, 84-85.

Long, L. (1982, October). Parents: The untapped resource. Momentum, 21-22.

Losen, S. T., & Diament, B. (1978). Parent conferences in the schools Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Mackay, D. A., & Marland, P. (1978, February). Thought processes of teachers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 151 328).

Mager, G. M. (1980). The conditions which influence a teacher in iniating contact with parents. Journal of Educational Research, 73(5), 276-282.

Manning, B. H. (1985, Summer). Conducting a worthwhile parent-teacher conference. Education, 105(4), 342-348.

Maurer, K. H. (1981, April). A seven course strategy to entice parents to school. The American School Board Journal, 36.

McLoughlin, C. R. (1987). Parent-teacher conferencing. Springfield, Illinois: Thomas Books.

McNair, K. (1978-1978, Winter). Capturing inflight decisions: Thoughts while teaching. Educational Research Quarterly, 3(4), 26-42.

McNair, K., & Joyce, B. (1978-1979, Winter). Thought and action: A frozen section--The South Bay study. Educational Research Quarterly, 3(4), 16-25.

McSweeny, J. P. (1983, March). Five guidelines for parent-teacher conferences. The Clearing House, 319-320.

Millar, T. P. (1969, May). When parents talk to teachers. The Elementary School Journal, 393-398.

Moles, O. C. (1982, November). Synthesis of recent research on parent participation in children's education. Educational Leadership, 40(2), 44-47.

Morrison, A., & McIntyre, D. (1973). Teachers and teaching. Victoria, Australia: Penguin Education, Penguin Books, Inc.

Olson, J. (1981). The effect of in-service training in parent/teacher conferencing on teacher rate of contacts with parents. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Idaho.

Paine, L. M. (1978, December). A practical guide to parent-teacher conferences. The Clearing House, 52(4), 177-178.

Paldi, D. W. (1984). A study of the relationships between elementary school parents' opinion of parent-teacher conferences and attitude toward the elementary schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco.

Parent-teacher conferences/the parent's point of view (1987, March). Academic Therapy, 22(4), 413-418.

Pickens, C. (1978). Tips for teachers on school-parent communication. Magnolia, Arizona: Magnolia School District.

Prichard, K. K. (1977). Effective parent-teacher conferences in urban schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Serivce No. ED 152 942)

Purnell, R. F., & Gotts, E. E. (1985, April). Preparation and role of school personnel for effective school family relations. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 262 000)

Rabbitt, J. A. (1978, March). The parent-teacher conference: Trauma or teamwork? Phi Delta Kappan, 471-472.

Raskas, H. I. (1977, June). Simformation 3: Home-school visits. Madison, Wisconsin: Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning.

Rathburn, D. (1978, October). Parent-teacher talks: Conferences or confrontations. Learning, 54-58.

Readdick, C. A. Golbeck, S. L., Klein, E. L., & Cartwright, C. A. (1984, July). The child-parent-teacher conference. Young Children, 67-73.

Reis, E. M. (1988, October). Conferencing skills: Working with parents. The Clearing House, 62, 81-83.

Rich, D. (1984, November/December). The questions parents ask! Instructor, 72-73.

Rotter, J. C., Robinson, E. H., & Fey, M. A. (1987). Parent-teacher conferencing. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Rowe, H. S. (1964). An evaluation of the organization and administration of parent-teacher conferences. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Rowell, J. C. (1981, February). The five rights of parents. Phi Delta Kappan, 441-443.

Ryan, C. (1976). The open partnerships--equality in running the schools. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Safran, D. (1975, April). Preparing teachers for parent involvement. California Journal of Teacher Education, 2(4), 53-65.

Saylor, M. L. (1971). Parents: Active partners in education. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education.

Schmidt, J. C., & Atles, J. W. (1976, May). Teacher-parent communication: A consulting model. The School Counselor, 23(5), 346-352.

Seibert, J. B. (1979). Energy trends in parent-school communication. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 182 734)

Shavelson, R. J. (1973, Summer). What is the basic teaching skill? The Journal of Teacher Education, 24(2), 144-151.

Shavelson, R. J. (1976). Teacher's decision making. The psychology of teaching methods, the seventy-fifth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

Shavelson, R. J. (1978, March). A model of teacher decision making. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.

Shavelson, R. J., Atwood, N. K., & Borko, H. (1977, November). Experiments on some factors contributing to teachers' pedagogical decisions. Cambridge Journal of Education, 14, 51-50.

Shavelson, R. J., & Borko, H. (1979, Summer). Research on teachers' deicisions in planning instruction. Educational Horizons, 57(4), 183-189.

Shavelson, R. J., & Stern, P. (1981, Winter). Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions, and behavior. Review of Educational Research, 51(4), 455-498.

Steinfatt, T. M. (1977). Human communication: An interpersonal introduction. Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Publishers.

Stout, I. W., & Langdon, G. (1966). What research says to the teacher: Parent-teacher relationships. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Sutcliffe, J., & Whitfield, R. (1979). Classroom-based teaching decisions. Teacher decision making in the classroom. Boston, Massachusetts: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Swick, K. J. (1981). Parent involvement: Strategies for early childhood educators. Champaign, Illinois; Stripes Publishing Company.

Swick, K. J., & Duff, R. E. (1978). The parent-teacher bond--relating, responding, and rewarding. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Trump, J. M. (1971, August). The importance of face-to-face communication. School Management, 15(8), 36-37.

Van Dyk, J. (1983). Parent-teacher conferences. South Lyon, Minnesota: South Lyon Community Schools.

Walker, J. E. (1984, December). Teacher public relations practices and their perceived importance. The Clearing House, 58, 186-190.

Waller, W. (1961). The sociology of teaching. New York: Russell & Russell.

Waugh, K. W. (1878, June). Person-to-person communication skills for school, home, and everywhere. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 158 455)

Welch, F. C., & Tisdale, P. C. (1986). Between parent and teacher. Springfield, Illinois: Thomas Books.

Williams, D. L., & Chavkin, N. F. (1984, December). Guidelines and strategies to train teachers for parent involvement. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Lab.

Wilson, J. (1983, Summer). The effects of age, occupation, race, and education on parent communication with the school. Education, 103(4), 402-404.

Witherspoon, R. (1983). A study of a parent-teacher conference in-service training curriculum to improve the effectiveness of communication for teachers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts.

Wolf, J. S., & Stephens, T. M. (1982). Effective skills in parent-teacher conferencing--the parent's perspective. Washington: National Center, Educational Media and Materials for the Handicapped.

Wolf, J. S., & Stephens, T. (1989, October). Parent-taecher conferences: Finding common ground. Educational Leadership, 28-31.

Zahorik, J. A. (1970, December). The effect of planning on teaching. The Elementary School Journal, 143-151.

Zahorik, J. A. (1975, November). Teacher's planning models. Educational Leadership, 134-139.

APPENDIX A

Pilot Project Forms and Teacher Information

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

November 7, 1989

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

Mr. and Mrs. Rex Ackerman
1246 Roxe
Fremont, NE 68025

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ackerman:

I am currently in the process of beginning to conduct my research for my Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My chosen topic deals with a study of parent-teacher communications and is specifically studying parent feedback that occurs during scheduled parent-teacher conferences. I am writing this letter to ask for your help and assistance.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as a part of my data gathering process is the taping of actual parent-teacher conferences. I have received permission from the Norfolk Public Schools to gather my data during their parent-teacher conferences in February of this school year. In an effort to make my study as organized and as efficient as possible I plan to do a trial run (pilot program) at Davenport School this November. Ms. Ganem and your classroom teacher have all been informed about my project. You are one of twenty-one families that were recommended by the Davenport Staff as participants in this pilot study.

The taped information from the conferences will be handled with extreme confidentiality and will be used to help us better understand the communication that takes place during a conference. When you appear for your scheduled parent-teacher conference in November we will plan to audio-tape that session with your classroom teacher. You will also be asked to respond to a simple questionnaire that should be filled out and left at your school on the day of your conference. Please bring this letter along with you to your scheduled conference. Your signature at the bottom of the page verifies your willingness to participate in this pilot project.

Thank you in advance for your help in this project. If you have any reservations or concerns about this project please contact your building principal or call me at my office (727-3020) or at my home (721-3127).

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

I am willing to participate in this research pilot project that will attempt to assess the effectiveness of communications during parent-teacher conferences.

_____
Parent's Signature

Rules for Audiotaping Selected Conferneces

1. Each teacher must have access to his or her own individual cassette tape player/recorder.

2. Each teacher will be supplied with two sixty-minute cassette tapes.

3. The sides of the tapes will be numbered in sequence from one to four. The first conference will be recorded on the side labeled "one"; the second conference will be recorded on the side labeled "two"; the third conference will be recorded on the side labeled "three"; and the fourth conference will be recorded on the side labeled "four."

4. Prior to each taped conference the teacher will be asked to re-check the equipment and the tapes to ensure that the conference can be recorded.

5. The tape player should be positioned so that both the voice of the teacher and the voice of the parent can be picked up by the microphone.

6. When the teacher is finished with the taping of the conference on sides one and three remember to fast-forward to the end of the tape. This will ensure that sides two and four will begin recording at the beginning of the tape.

7. Please make any notes or evidence of planning that was done prior to the audiotaped conferences available to the researcher. All of this information will be returned to the teacher.

8. As soon as possible, following one of the audiotaped conferences, please complete an effectiveness questionnaire concerning that particular conference. These four questionnaires will be picked upon along with the four audiotaped conferences.

9. Remember to collect each parent's signed permission slip allowing the conference to be audiotaped. You will be supplied with extra forms to be used in case the parent forgets to bring his or hers along to the conference.

Parent-Teacher Conference Communications
Effectiveness Questionnaire
Parents

	Poor Communication	Fair Communication	Good Communication	Excellent Communication
Directions: Please circle the appropriate number that corresponds with your response to the question.				
How would you rate the communication used by the teacher . . .				
1. in "opening" the conference to assist you in developing a comfortable feeling and attitude towards the conference?	1	2	3	4
2. in setting a positive emotional climate for the conference?	1	2	3	4
3. in identifying the specific goals and objectives for the conference?	1	2	3	4
4. in meeting those specific goals and objectives?	1	2	3	4
5. in reporting particular progress about this child's academic work?	1	2	3	4
6. in responding to questions raised by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
7. regarding the solving of problem issues?	1	2	3	4
8. in showing commitment to the solutions of the various problems?	1	2	3	4
9. in balancing the participation between you and the teacher during the conference?	1	2	3	4
10. in response to the concerns that were expressed by you during the conference?	1	2	3	4
11. as it pertains to the overall effectiveness of the conference?	1	2	3	4

12. Additional comment (use the back of this questionnaire if needed):

Parent-Teacher Conference Communications
Effectiveness Questionnaire
Teachers

Directions: Please circle the appropriate number
that corresponds with your response
to each question.

How would you rate the communication used by
you . . .

		Poor Communication	Fair Communication	Good Communication	Excellent Communication
1.	in "opening" the conference to assist the parent in developing a comfortable feeling and attitude toward the conference?	1	2	3	4
2.	in setting a positive emotional climate for the conference?	1	2	3	4
3.	in identifying the specific goals and objectives for the conference?	1	2	3	4
4.	in meeting those specific goals and objectives?	1	2	3	4
5.	in reporting particular progress about this specific child's academic work?	1	2	3	4
6.	in responding to questions raised by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
7.	regarding the solving of problem issues?	1	2	3	4
8.	in showing your commitment to the solutions of the various problems?	1	2	3	4
9.	in balancing the participation between you and the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
10.	in response to the concerns expressed by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
11.	as it pertains to the overall effectiveness of this conference?	1	2	3	4
12.	Additional comments (use the back of this questionnaire if needed):				

_____ School
Staff Meeting
Monday - November 13 - 7:34 a.m.
Pilot Project

Teacher Packets:

    1. Copies of parent letters (extra)
    2. Rules for audiotaping
    3. Parent questionnaire (labeled) (two parents?)
    4. Teacher questionnaire (labeled)
    5. Labeled audiotapes

Informational Items:

    1. Please keep any preconference plans or notes for the pilot
        conferences. Also a notation or example of any material that
        was shared.
    2. Signed permission forms
    3. Correlation between labeled items (NECESSARY)
    4. Drop-box for parent questionnaires
    5. Follow-up - Parents
                    Teachers (some interviews)
                             (validity questionnaires)
    6. Tapes/teacher questionnaires to office

QUESTIONNAIRES/CONCERNS

APPENDIX B

Data Gathering Forms and Validity and Reliability
Feedback/Information

Tape Review Form

Teacher	Tape	Tape Code	

Teacher _____

Tape _____

1. Who attended this conference?

2. Who requested this conference?

3. General student information: Family:

                                            Academic abilities:

                                            Attitude:

                                            Behavior:

                                            Special needs:

As the time for this conference was growing near, what topics did you feel needed to be discussed? Did you have a written plan or agenda?

Was there any information that you were considering for discussion that made you particularly anxious?

What was your general feeling of confidence as you approached this conference?

What were your thoughts as you sat down at this conference with the parent or parents?

Tape Review:

Based upon your plan (what you wanted to accomplish) how successful do you feel this conference was?

What thoughts were you having when this conference ended?

What, if any, strategies (new helpful information) did you come away from this conference with that you didn't have when it started?

	QUESTIONS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Tot
Teacher One	10	9	9	12	12	11	9	10	11	12	12	
Parents of Teacher One	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	
Difference	+2	+3	+3	—	—	+1	+3	+2	+1	—	—	
Teacher Two	11	12	9	11	11	10	10	12	11	12	11	
Parents of Teacher Two	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	
Difference	+1	—	+3	+1	+1	+2	+2	—	+1	—	+1	
Teacher Three	9	10	8	9	12	10	10	9	11	11	10	
Parents of Teacher Three	11	11	11	10	12	10	12	12	11	11	12	
Difference	+2	+1	+3	+1	—	—	+2	+3	—	—	+2	
Teacher Four	6	6	7	7	8	8	7	8	8	8	8	
Parents of Teacher Four	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	
Difference	—	+1	—	—	—	—	+1	—	—	—	-1	
Teacher Five	6	7	6	6	8	7	6	8	7	7	7	
Parents of Teacher Five	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	
Difference	+1	—	+2	+2	—	+1	+2	—	+1	+1	+1	
Teacher Six	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	
Parents of Teacher Six	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	8	8	
Difference	+3	+2	+2	+2	+3	+2	+2	+2	+1	+2	+2	
Teacher Seven	6	8	8	8	8	8	6	8	7	8	8	
Parents of Teacher Seven	7	8	7	8	8	8	6	8	8	8	8	
Difference	+1	—	-1	—	—	—	—	—	+1	—	—	

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-727-3020

October 6, 1989

Marlene Koglin
Clarkson Elementary School
1005 N. Clarkson Street
Fremont, NE 68025

Dear Marlene:

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral
Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My chosen topic
deals with a study of parent-teacher communications and is specifically
studying parent feedback that occurs during scheduled parent-teacher
conferences.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as part of my data gathering
process is the enclosed questionnaire entitled: "Parent-Teacher Conference
Communications Effectiveness Questionnaire/Teachers". This questionnaire
will be used to gather information from a teacher regarding the effective-
ness of the communication that occurred in the parent-teacher conference
that they just conducted.

In order to establish validity for this questionnaire I am asking your
help to serve on a panel of experts who would critique its content and
structure. I have also enclosed a second sheet which asks you some
specific questions regarding the questionnaire. Please write your
responses to each question on the space provided. A self-addressed
envelope has been included for your convenience. I would ask that you
return your responses to me by Friday, October 13th in the normal school
mail. Thank you in advance for your help in this project.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-727-3020

October 6, 1989

Sandy Bookmeyer
2933 Snead Drive
Fremont, NE   68025

Dear Sandy:

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral
Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My chosen topic
deals with a study of parent-teacher communications and is specifically
studying parent feedback that occurs during scheduled parent-teacher
conferences.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as part of my data gathering
process is the enclosed questionnaire entitled: "Parent-Teacher Conference
Communications Effectiveness Questionnaire/Parents". This questionnaire
will be used to gather information from a parent regarding the effective-
ness of the communication that occurred in the parent-teacher conference
in which they just participated.

In order to establish validity for this questionnaire I am asking your
help to serve on a panel of experts who would critique its content and
structure. I have also enclosed a second sheet which asks you some
specific questions regarding the questionnaire. Please write your
responses to each question on the space provided. A self-addressed
stamped envelope has been included for your convenience. I would ask
that you return your responses to me by Friday, October 13th. Thank you
in advance for your help in this project.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

November 20, 1989

Mr. and Mrs. Erik Palle
5107 Ventura
Fremont, NE 68025

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Palle:

As you are already aware, I am in the process of conducting my research
for my Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You
just took part in the pilot project of a study that deals with parent-
teacher communications and is specifically studying parent feedback that
occurs during scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

One of the tools that was used in the pilot study as a part of my data
gathering process was the enclosed questionnaire. This questionnaire
was used to gather information from you regarding the effectiveness of
the communication that occurred in the parent-teacher conference in which
you just participated.

In order to establish reliability for this questionnaire I am asking your
additional help. Please think back to the parent-teacher conference in
which you just participated. Using the experiences, interaction and
information from that conference, please respond a second time to the
questionnaire. The research method involved in this process is termed
the "test" - "retest" method to establish reliability. Use the enclosed
self-addressed stamped envelope and return the questionnaire to me by
Monday, November 27th.

This process will help me to make some judgments concerning the question-
naire prior to using it in my actual research. Please feel free to make
any additional comments on this second questionnaire that you feel could
benefit me as a I work to complete this project. Thank you once again
for your help.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-727-3020

October 6, 1989

Leon Bracker
Linden Elementary School
1205 N. "L" Street
Fremont, NE   68025

Dear Leon:

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral
Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My chosen topic
deals with a study of parent-teacher communications and is specifically
studying parent feedback that occurs during scheduled parent-teacher
conferences.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as a part of my data gather-
ing process is the enclosed questionnaire. This questionnaire will be
used to gather information from a teacher regarding the effectiveness of
the communication that occurred in the parent-teacher conference that
they just conducted.

In order to establish reliability for this questionnaire I am asking your
help through your responses. Please establish a mind-set concerning a
previous parent-teacher conference that you conducted. Using the experi-
ences, interaction and information from that conference, please respond
to the questionnaire. Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope and
return the questionnaire to me through the normal school mail by Friday,
October 13th. After I receive your response in the mail I will contact
you again for some additional information.

This process will help me to make some judgments concerning the question-
naire prior to using it in my actual research. Thank you in advance for
your help in this project.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

November 28, 1989

Joyce Norman
Linden Elementary School
1205 N. "L"
Fremont, NE   68025

Dear Joyce:

I really appreciated the fact that you took the time to complete my
questionnaire that I sent to you last week. I have one more favor
to ask of you.

In order to establish reliability on the questionnaire, I am using
the "test"/"retest" method. This requires each individual to
respond to this questionnaire two separate times.

Please reestablish your mind-set concerning the same parent-teacher
conference that you used as your source of information for your
first response. Using the same experiences, interactions and
information from that conference, please respond again to the
enclosed questionnaire. Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope
and return the questionnaire to me through the normal school mail
by Monday, December 4th. Thank you again for your help with this
project.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures

Teacher _____

Personal experiences (years of experience, grades, etc.):

Please list the specific training sessions that you have been involved
in dealing with parent-teacher conferences.

What are the most vital characteristics, in your opinion, of an
effective parent-teacher conference?

If such a training program were to be organized, what would you see
as the critical elements and/or components of such a program?

Other Comments:

Parent-Teacher Conference Communications
Effectiveness Questionnaire
Parents

Directions: Please circle the appropriate number
that corresponds with your response to
each question.

How would you rate the communication used by the
teacher . . . .

	Poor Communication	Fair Communication	Good Communication	Excellent Communication
1. in "opening" the conference to assist you in developing a comfortable feeling and attitude toward the conference?	1	2	3	4
2. in setting a positive emotional climate for the conference?	1	2	3	4
3. in identifying the specific goals and objectives for the conference?	1	2	3	4
4. in meeting those specific goals and objectives?	1	2	3	4
5. in reporting particular progress about this specific child's academic work?	1	2	3	4
6. in responding to questions raised by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
7. regarding the solving of problem issues?	1	2	3	4
8. in showing commitment to the solutions of the various problems?	1	2	3	4
9. in balancing the participation between you and the teacher during the conference?	1	2	3	4
10. in response to the concerns that were expressed by you during the conference?	1	2	3	4
11. as it pertains to the overall effectiveness of the conference?	1	2	3	4

12. Additional comments (use the back of this
questionnaire if needed);

Validity Questionnaire
Parents

1. Do the directions offer adequate information and clarity for the individual filling out the form?

2. Is the language used in this parent questionnaire appropriate and understandable?

3. Do the questions all relate to the topic of parent-teacher communciations?

4. Is the format of the questionnaire appropriate?

5. Is the questionnaire too long?

6. Additional Comments:

Parent-Teacher Conference Communications
Effectiveness Questionnaire
Teachers

Directions: Please circle the appropriate number that corresponds with your response to each question.

How would you rate the communication used by you . . .

	Poor Communication	Fair Communication	Good Communication	Excellent Communication
1. in "opening" the conference to assist the parent in developing a comfortable feeling and attitude toward the conference?	1	2	3	4
2. in setting a positive emotional climate for the conference?	1	2	3	4
3. in identifying the specific goals and objectives for the conference?	1	2	3	4
4. in meeting those specific goals and objectives?	1	2	3	4
5. in reporting particular progress about this specific child's academic work?	1	2	3	4
6. in responding to questions raised by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
7. regarding the solving of problem issues?	1	2	3	4
8. in showing your commitment to the solutions of the various problems?	1	2	3	4
9. in balancing the participation between you and the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
10. in response to the concerns expressed by the parent during the conference?	1	2	3	4
11. as it pertains to the overall effectiveness of this conference?	1	2	3	4

12. Additional comments (use the back of this questionnaire if needed):

Validity Questionnaire
Teachers

1. Do the directions offer adequate information and clarity for the individual filling out the form?

2. Is the language used in this teacher questionnaire appropriate and understandable?

3. Do the questions all relate to the topic of parent-teacher communications?

4. Is the format of the questionnaire appropriate?

5. Is the questionnaire too long?

6. Additional comments:

Test/Re-Test

+ equals "yes" − equals "no"	QUESTIONS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Tot
Parent One − Response 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Parent One − Response 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	
Parent Two − Response 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Parent Two − Response 2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	42
Change	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	
Parent Three− Response 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Parent Three− Response 2	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	41
Change	−	−	+	+	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	
Parent Four − Response 1	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	39
Parent Four − Response 2	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	39
Change	−	−	−	+	+	+	+	−	−	−	+	
Parent Five − Response 1	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	39
Parent Five − Response 2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	41
Change	−	−	+	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	+	
Parent Six − Response 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Parent Six − Response 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	
Parent Seven− Response 1	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	41
Parent Seven− Response 2	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	39
Change	−	−	−	+	+	−	+	+	−	−	−	

Test/Re-Test

+ equals "yes" − equals "no"	QUESTIONS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Tot
Teacher 1 − Response 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	35
Teacher 1 − Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	+	+	−	
Teacher 2 − Response 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	31
Teacher 2 − Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	31
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	+	+	−	−	
Teacher 3 − Response 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Teacher 3 − Response 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	44
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 4 − Response 1	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	28
Teacher 4 − Response 2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	29
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 5 − Response 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	34
Teacher 5 − Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	34
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 6 − Response 1	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	38
Teacher 6 − Response 2	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	38
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 7 − Response 1	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	34
Teacher 7 − Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	32
Change	−	−	+	−	−	+	+	−	+	−	−	

Test/Re-Test

+ equals "yes" – equals "no"	QUESTIONS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Tot
Teacher 1 – Response 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33
Teacher 1 – Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33
Change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Teacher 2 – Response 1	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	34
Teacher 2 – Response 2	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	34
Change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Teacher 3 – Response 1	4	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	37
Teacher 3 – Response 2	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	39
Change	–	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	
Teacher 4 – Response 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	32
Teacher 4 – Response 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	32
Change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Teacher 5 – Response 1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	31
Teacher 5 – Response 2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	31
Change	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Teacher 6 – Response 1	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	38
Teacher 6 – Response 2	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	39
Change	+	–	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	–	
Teacher 7 – Response 1	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	34
Teacher 7 – Response 2	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	4	36
Change	–	+	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	+	

Test/Re-Test

+ equals "yes" - equals "no"	QUESTIONS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Tot
Teacher 8 - Response 1	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	37
Teacher 8 - Response 2	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	36
Change	−	−	+	+	+	−	−	−	−	+	+	
Teacher 9 - Response 1	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	37
Teacher 9 - Response 2	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	36
Change	−	−	+	+	−	−	−	−	−	+	−	
Teacher 10 - Response 1	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	40
Teacher 10 - Response 2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	42
Change	−	+	−	−	−	−	+	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 11 - Response 1	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	42
Teacher 11 - Response 2	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	42
Change	+	−	−	−	−	+	+	−	−	−	−	
Teacher 12 - Response 1	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	37
Teacher 12 - Response 2	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	38
Change	−	−	+	−	−	−	+	−	−	+	−	
Teacher 13 - Response 1	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	37
Teacher 13 - Response 2	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	37
Change	−	−	−	−	−	−	+	+	−	−	−	
Teacher 14 - Response 1	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	43
Teacher 14 - Response 2	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	42
Change	−	−	+	+	+	−	−	−	−	−	−	

APPENDIX C

Forms and Correspondence for the Research Project

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

December 29, 1989

Pam Handke
Washington Elementary School
1205 South 2nd Street
Norfolk, NE   68701

Dear Pam,

I really appreciated the time that you took last week to visit with me on the phone about my research project. I am excited about some of the possible outcomes that exist based upon our conversation.

I look forward to seeing you on Friday, January 5th at 1:30 P.M. at Washington Elementary School.

Sincerely,

Keith A. Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KAR/kmp

Fremont Public Schools

KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

January 26, 1990

Dr. Carol Beaty
Northern Hills Elementary School
600 North 12th Street
Norfolk, NE 68701

Dear Carol,

I have included packets for the teachers who were randomly sampled to participate from your building. I have written their names on the packet of information - I hope that what I have included is helpful and not confusing.

The following is a timeline that we discussed at our last meeting:

January 29th	-	Sampling and Packet Information to the three schools
February Newsletter	-	Information about the project
February 1st - 9th	-	Determination of WHO will be attending the conferences
February 13th	-	Staff Meeting 4:00 P.M.
February 15th	-	Conference Schedules sent home
February 15th	-	Parent Letters Mailed
February 20th-22nd	-	Conference Audio-Taping
February 26th & 27th	-	Teacher Interviews

I will call you on Wednesday (1/31) to see if the selected teachers are willing to participate. THANKS!

Sincerely,

Keith A. Rohwer

KAR/kmp

Enclosures

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

February 9, 1990

Julie Fullner
Northern Hills Elementary School
600 North 12th
Norfolk, NE 68701

Dear Julie,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my study regarding parent teacher conferences. I recognize that this is a real commitment of time and effort on your part from an already full and busy schedule. I am hopeful that our results will benefit you in your work with parents.

I look forward to meeting you on Tuesday, February 13th at 4:00 P.M. at Washington Elementary School.

Sincerely,

Keith A. Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KAR/kmp

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

January 29, 1990

PROJECT INFORMATION

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My chosen topic deals with a study of parent-teacher communications and is specifically studying parent feedback that occurs during scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as a part of my data gathering process is the taping of actual parent-teacher conferences. Dr. James Merritt, the Superintendent of Schools in Norfolk, has given his permission to allow me to gather this information from parent-teacher conferences in Norfolk. I will be working with teachers from Washington, Lincoln and Northern Hills Elementary Schools. I have had two planning sessions with the elementary principals from these buildings. Your name was randomly sampled from your school's staffing list and I plan to work with a total of ten elementary teachers from the three buildings.

The process will consist of the audio-taping of conferences, a parent and teacher questionnaire about each conference and an in depth interview as a follow-up with each teacher. The interviews will be conducted during the school day and substitute teachers will be provided.

I have included some sample information: 1) questionnaire copies; 2) audio-taping guidelines; and 3) a sample parent letter. We have planned an orientation meeting for February 13th to visit with the entire group in an effort to clarify this process. At that time I will share the specific details and time lines for completing this project.

Thank you in advance for your help in this project. I believe that the information that we gather will be beneficial to all parties involved. I look forward to personally meeting you on the 13th.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Enclosures .

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

October 6, 1989

Mr. and Mrs. Keith Rohwer
2922 N. Wyoming
Fremont, NE   68025

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Rohwer:

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral
Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I would appreciate
your help in this project.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as a part of my data gather-
ing process is the audio-taping of actual parent-teacher conferences. If
you agree to help with this project at your scheduled conference in
February, we will plan to audio-tape that session with your classroom
teacher. You will also be asked to respond to a simple questionnaire
that should be filled out and left at your school on the day of your
conference. Please bring this letter along with you to your scheduled
conference with Mrs. Smith. Your signature at the bottom of the page
will show your willingness to help with this project.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose not to
take part we will certainly respect your wishes. Please attend your
scheduled conference whether or not you choose to participate. Thank you
in advance for your help in this project.

If you want more information about this project feel free to contact
Mr. Tom Davis at Lincoln Elementary School (371-1752).

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

I am willing to participate in this research project that will attempt to
assess the effectiveness of communications during parent-teacher
conferences.

_____
Parent's Signature

NORFOLK
PUBLIC
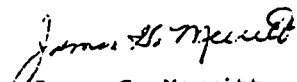# SCHOOLS
DR. JAMES G. MERRITT.
SUPERINTENDENT

December 1, 1989

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent
Fremont Public Schools
957 North Pierce Street
Fremont, NE 68025

Dear Keith:

On behalf of Norfolk Public Schools I am pleased to provide you
permission to utilize the human resources of this school district as per
your study concerning the effectiveness of the communication and
decision-making processes during parent-teacher conferences. I am
excited about the study implications for improving parent-teacher
conferences and wish you the best in your research.

Sincerely,

James G. Merritt
Superintendent of Schools

vw

Guidelines for Audiotaping Conferences

1. Each teacher must have access to his or her own individual cassette tape player/recorder.

2. Each teacher will be supplied with sixty-minute cassette tapes.

3. The sides of the tapes will be numbered in sequence. The first conference will be recorded on the side labeled "one," the second on the side labeled "two," the third on the side labeled "three," and the fourth on the side labeled "four," until all conferences have been completed.

4. Prior to each taped conference the teacher will be asked to re-check the equipment and the tape to ensure that the conference can be recorded.

5. The tape player should be positioned so that both the voice of the teacher and the voice of the parent can be picked up by the microphone. The tape player should be turned on prior to the parent entering the room.

6. When the teacher is finished with the taping of the conference remember to fast-forward to the end of the tape. This will ensure that the other side will begin recording at the beignning of the tape.

7. Please make any notes or evidence of planning that was done prior to the audiotaped conferences available to the researcher. All of this information will be returned to the teacher.

8. As soon as possible, following one of the audiotaped conferences, please complete an effectiveness questionnaire concerning that particular conference. These questionnaires will be picked up along with the audiotaped conferences.

9. Remember to collect each parent's signed permission slip allowing us to audiotape the conference. You will be supplied with extra forms to be used in case the parent forgets to bring his or hers along to the conference.

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-721-6720

February 15, 1990

Steve and Jody Mattern
118 E. Madison
Norfolk, NE 68701

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mattern:

I am currently in the process of conducting my research for my Doctoral
Dissertation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I would appreciate
your help in this project.

One of the tools that I am going to be using as a part of my data gather-
ing process is the audio-taping of actual parent-teacher conferences. If
you agree to help with this project at your scheduled conference in
February, we will plan to audio-tape that session with your classroom
teacher. You will also be asked to respond to a simple questionnaire
that should be filled out and left at your school on the day of your
conference. Please bring this letter along with you to your scheduled
conference with Mrs. Schram. Your signature at the bottom of the page
will show your willingness to help with this project.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you choose not to
take part we will certainly respect your wishes. Please attend your
scheduled conference whether or not you choose to participate. Thank you
in advance for your help in this project.

If you want more information about this project feel free to contact
Mr. Tom Davis at Lincoln Elementary School (371-1752).

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

I am willing to participate in this research project that will attempt to
assess the effectiveness of communications during parent-teacher conferences.

_____
Parent's Signature

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-727-3020

February 16, 1990

Mrs. Linda Schram
Lincoln Elementary School
310 S. 3rd
Norfolk, NE   68701

Dear Linda:

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you on Tuesday, February
13th to explain my project. Your efforts are a very important
ingredient in making this a successful experience. I am thankful
for your support and participation.

The parents who have conferences scheduled with you have all been
contacted by letter and should be aware of the project.

I am looking forward to the interviewing process scheduled for
Monday, February 26th and Tuesday, February 27th. Good luck during
conferences!

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

KR/sp

Tape Review Form

Teacher	Tape	Tape Code	

Teacher _____

Personal Experiences (years of experience, grades, etc.)

Please list the specific training sessions that you have been involved in dealing with parent-teacher conferences.

What are the most vital characteristics, in your opinion, of an effective parent-teacher conference?

If such a training program were to be organized, what would you see as the critical elements and/or components of such a program?

Other Comments:

Teacher _____

Tape _____

1. Who attended this conference?

2. Who requested the conference?

3. General student information: Family:
                                  Academic abilities:
                                  Attitude:
                                  Behavior:
                                  Special needs:

As the time for this conference was growing near, what topics did you feel needed to be discussed? Did you have a written plan or agenda?

Was there any information that you were considering for discussion that made you particularly anxious?

What was your general feeling of confidence as you approached this conference?

What were your thoughts as you sat down at this conference with the parent or parents?

Tape Review:

Based upon your plan (what you wanted to accomplish) how successful do you feel this conference was?

What thoughts were you having when this conference ended?

What, if any, strategies (new helpful information) did you come away from this confernece with that you didn't have when it started?

Fremont Public Schools
KEITH ROHWER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

957 NORTH PIERCE STREET
FREMONT, NEBRASKA 68025

CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE 402-727-3020

April 26, 1990

Carol Beaty	Pam Handke	Tom Davis
Lisa Anderson	Barbara Farrar	Carol Waggoner
Julie Fullner	Pauline Luttman	Linda Schram
Lori Porn	Jackie Porter	Kitty Judy

The school year is quickly passing by and I wanted to communicate with you folks one more time. I hope that my small "gift" will remind you of our work together when you have a moment to relax in the future.

Your help with my project was greatly appreciated and the opportunity to meet quality people such as yourselves was most rewarding. Norfolk Schools are a better place because of your kindness, dedication and commitment to the children that you serve. Hope to see you in the future.

Sincerely,

Keith Rohwer
Assistant Superintendent

**University
of Nebraska
Medical Center**

The University of Nebraska
Institutional Review Board
For the Protection of
Human Subjects

December 22, 1989

Keith Rohwer
Curriculum and Instruction
UNL

IRB #   021 EX

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: An Analytical Study Concerning Parent-Teacher Communications:

The Effectiveness of Feedback in Parent-Teacher Conferences

Dear Mr. Rohwer:

I have reviewed your Exemption Information Form for the above-mentioned research project. According to the Information provided this proposal is exempt from IRB review under 45 CFR 46:101B 1,3 .

It is understood that an acceptable standard of confidentiality of data will be maintained.

Sincerely,

Ernest D. Prentice, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary

EDP/lmc

University of Nebraska—Lincoln   University of Nebraska at Omaha   University of Nebraska Medical Center