Implementation of Strategies that Increased Teacher/Parent Communication in a Third Grade Classroom

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Abstract

Twenty third grade students enrolled in a rural Midwest school participated in this study. The purpose of the project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade class. Three methods were of communication were developed by the teacher based on a review of the literature. The methods were: (a) a weekly newsletter, (b) parent-initiated notes, (c) and Good Notes written by the teacher describing students' positive behavior. Two instruments were used to gather data. These were Daily Contact Logs, one of which was used to record data before the communication methods were introduced and the other during the intervention period. The logs were designed to record the number and type of contacts between the teacher and the parents of the students. Results indicated an increase in communication initiated by both the teacher and parents.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my husband, K.C., for his encouragement, empathy and patience that helped me complete my goal I once felt was unattainable. Sincere thanks to my daughter, Reese, for her cooperation and tolerance for when I could not spend time with her. Last, I would like to thank my dad and mom, for instilling a work ethic in me, which allowed me to understand that with perseverance, all things are possible.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This teacher was concerned with the trend in her classroom regarding parental communication. Within her 3rd grade classroom, parents and the teacher did not communicate unless there was a problem with the student, rather than establishing an open line of communication, before there was a difficulty. In addition, this teacher also acknowledged that most teacher/parent communication flowed one way, from school to home, often not encouraging parents to reciprocate. This teacher noted that families and schools shared a responsibility for promoting the educational success of students. In the situation, the teacher felt she had the resources and responsibility to assist parents in fulfilling their educational roles.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade class. The researcher sought answers to the following questions:

1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades?
2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent communication strategies identified in the professional literature?
3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade classroom?
4. Did teacher/parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?

Justification

Just as it is important to use a variety of teaching techniques in working with children, according to the literature reviewed, it is best to use a variety of communication tools with parents. Different parents value different forms of contact. The teacher conducted the research in order to increase communication with parents. The teacher was concerned that she had very little communication with parents of students in her 3rd grade classroom. From the limited contact the teacher did have with parents, such as at the parent/teacher conferences, she knew that many parents did want to have an open line of communication. Therefore, the teacher decided to research and implement communication strategies that would establish a line of communication between the school and home.

Definition of Terms

communication: The two-way exchange of thoughts between parents and teachers either verbally or written.

parents/guardian: The adult charged with the welfare of the student.

specific communication techniques: The method of communicating chosen by the researcher to focus on in this study. They were: weekly contact through newsletters, letters from parents to teacher/researcher and good notes to students.

third grade class: 20 students consisting of 9 boys and 11 girls.

newsletter: A weekly pamphlet sent home to families containing information about school events.
parent-initiated communication form: A weekly opportunity for the parents to send a note to the teacher.

Good Notes: A brief note describing a student’s good behavior in class.

Limitations

The research was limited to a small, rural K-4 elementary school in a midwest state. Due to limited time length of research time, class size and age of students the results of this research may not be generalized to other school systems or classrooms.
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project was to implement specific communication strategies with the parents to increase communication. The researcher sought answers to the following questions. 1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades? 2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent communication strategies identified in the professional literature? 3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom? 4. Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?

Research question 1

Research question number 1 was, “What were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades?” In order to answer research question 1, a review of the professional literature was conducted. According to Ludwig (1999) when parents were involved in their children’s education, both children and parents were likely to benefit. Lugwig described this benefit as children’s improved grades as parents communication increased with their child’s teacher. Furthermore, he reported, that good communication between teachers and parents was often the foundation of a successful school year for all involved. Therefore, children’s grades improved and they enjoyed school more.

The reviewed literature provided a number of ways to implement effective communication strategies between teachers and parents for the benefit of students. According to Swick (1997), when parents and teachers shared information, children
learned more and parents and teachers felt more supported. He stated that good communication could create positive feelings between teachers and parents. In addition, he noted schools and teachers knew that good communication with parents was an important part of their job. In addition, Love (1996) added that teachers needed to know about the children's families, language, and culture in order to help children learn. Rosenthal (2001) added that parents benefit from communicating with the teacher because they learned more about what happened in the classroom and this knowledge encouraged reinforced learning at home. The literature reviewed, revealed a variety of both verbal and written communication techniques were found that have been used between teachers and parents.

Written

According to Swick (1997), communication between the teacher and parents right from the beginning of the school year was very important. Therefore, teachers should write introductory letters, welcome back letters or postcards to parents. This early action informed parents that the teacher wanted to have open communication between home and school. He went on to explain these forms of written communication included in general, the teacher’s excitement about the upcoming year, the homework policy, a discipline plan, and the background of the teacher.

Personal Notes

Swick (1997) reported that, positive notes sent home throughout the year was another form of effective written communication. He described, a positive note as a few lines stating some good news about a student. An example of a positive note could be, *Joey helped another student read an Accelerated Reader (A.R.) book, as well as, helped*
that student take an A.R. test. Other written examples provided in the literature were, birthday greetings, get well cards, and thank you notes written by the teacher to students and parents (Canter 2001).

Newsletters and E-mails

Clark (1996) noted that weekly newsletters and e-mails kept parents informed as to events and activities in the classroom. Clark suggested that when writing a newsletter it should include brief descriptions of upcoming events and test dates, along with homework assignments, and tips for parents on how to help their child at home.

An updated version of the newsletter was using email. According to Canter (2001) face-to-face meetings with the teacher was the best practice. However, busy lifestyles undermined the ability to schedule regular parent-teacher conferences. Canter added that as a result, most parents met with teachers only when there was a problem. He suggested that with email parents could easily reach teachers to discuss learning objectives and issues, while teachers could quickly update the parents on the student’s progress and the individual student’s need.

However, Canter (2001) noted parents of children living in low economic communities often do not have a computer or access to the internet, which made it impossible to reach all of the parents. On a positive note, Clark (1999) commented that e-mails could occur daily and at the teacher’s discretion. This form of communication, when available, provided a timely communication link with parents.

Verbal

Open House

According to Ludwig (1999) the first of many verbal techniques suggested from the literature reviewed, was the school/classroom open house. She discussed, an open
house as an event usually held early in the evening at the beginning of the school year, during the evening. In addition, Moats (1999) described the open house as a time when parents were invited to look around the school, see their child’s classroom, and become familiar with their child’s teacher. He stated that open houses could be used to set the tone of open communication at the beginning of the year that could continue throughout the year, making sure to work around parent’s work schedules. Ludwig continued to note that during the open house teachers communicated to the parents the importance of homework, completion of work, discipline plans, and school building rules. In turn, parents were also given a chance to ask questions about the curriculum, classroom guidelines, and school policies.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Love (1996) reported that establishing a positive relationship with parents must be achieved at the beginning of the school year. She indicated that frequently a teacher’s second opportunity to meet with parents was at the parent-teacher conference. Love indicated that parent-teacher conferences should be scheduled as early in the school year as possible, to develop trust between parents and teachers. If a parent does not trust the teacher, communication will fail. Rosenthal (2001) agreed that conferences were a prime opportunity for teachers to gain the cooperation of parents in the education of their children. He suggested that often the parent-teacher conference was the only contact between parents and teachers. Therefore, it was an important opportunity in to establish a trusting and cooperative relationship.
Informal Contact

Love (1996) described informal contacts as parents and teachers communicating at after school functions, before or after school, when parents are dropping off or picking up their children, and in community activities. Furthermore, these informal contacts allowed parents to get a sense of their child’s teacher and to communicate on a friendlier level.

Telephone Calls

The final verbal method suggested by the literature was telephoning. Clark (1999) indicated that when a telephone call from school carries information that is positive, the atmosphere between the home and the school was improved. He suggested that to be most effective, parents needed to receive at least two or three positive phone calls over the course of the school year.

The review of literature suggested many different effective communication techniques to be used between home and school. Both verbal and written communication techniques were discussed. The literature did not state that one method was better than the other was. However, the literature reviewed did indicate that due to socioeconomic levels, different types of communication might have some limitation. According to Love (1999), families in lower economic circumstances may not have access to email or telephones. As well as some parents who worked in the evenings, which prevented them from attending open houses held at that time. Love (1999) stated that many of the strategies might be used at the same time in order to open and sustain teacher/parent communication.
Research question 2

Research question number 2 was, "What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent communication strategies identified in the professional literature?"

In order to answer research question 2, a review of the professional literature was conducted. Canter (2001) proposed that the foundation for good parent teacher relationship was frequent and open communication. He added that both teachers and parents shared the responsibility for creating such a foundation. According to the literature, there were several strategies that teachers could use to establish a climate conducive to open communication.

*Written*

*Personal Notes*

According to the professional literature, one of the strengths of personal notes, as Canter (2001) indicated, were a convenient and an easy way to communicate with busy parents. Parents who work second or third shifts often cannot attend after school meetings. Furthermore, parents in low socioeconomic communities often do not have telephones, making it impossible to communicate through telephone conversations. With personal notes, the parents were more likely to receive this form of communication from their child's teacher.

*Newsletters and E-mails*

Clark (1996) maintained that because elementary age children often did not communicate the details of class work to parents, a newsletter helped keep parents up-to-date on upcoming tests, homework, and special events going on in the classroom. Clark also noted, that one of the strengths of a newsletter was that is was easy for the
teacher to create, print, and distribute. A newsletter should not be a long form letter, this is why it should be quick and easy for a teacher to publish one. However, a limitation observed by Clark was the teacher was not always assured that parents received the newsletter or if the parents read the newsletter.

According to Canter (2001) face-to-face meetings with the teacher were the best form of verbal communication. However, busy lifestyles undermined the ability to schedule regular parent-teacher conferences regularly. Canter added that as a result, most parents met with teachers only when there was a problem. He suggested that with email parents could easily reach teachers to discuss learning objectives and issues, while teachers could quickly update the parents on the student's progress and individual need. However, Canter (2001) noted parents of child in low economic communities often do not have a computer or access for the internet, thus impossible to reach all of the parents.

Verbal

Open House

During an open house, parents are invited to look around the school, see their child's classroom, and become familiar with their child's teacher. Canter (2001) saw this as strength. He stated that parents feel more comfortable talking with the teacher as the school year developed, if they have a sense of the school building and where their child's classroom is located in the building. He stated that open houses could be used to set the tone of open communication at the beginning of the year that could continue throughout the year, making sure to work around parent's work schedules.

One of the limitations according to Clark (1996) of an open house was that it was usually held during the day or early evening. This made it hard for parents to come to an
open house, especially in communities where parents could not afford to take days off of work. Another limitation noted by Clark is that an open house was very brief with many parents and children coming and going, which did not give parents and teachers much time to communicate in a quiet environment.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Love (1996) indicated that parent-teacher conferences should be scheduled as early in the school year as possible, to develop trust between parents and teachers. This way, if a concern arose during the school year, the parents felt comfortable talking with a teacher they had already met. Canter (2001) disagreed with Love, when he stated that early parent teacher conferences were a limitation because the teacher did not know his or her students well enough yet to have a conference. Canter argued that parent-teacher conferences should be held twice during the school year. The first should be held in the middle of the school year and the second towards the end of the year. Thus, giving teachers a chance to discuss the education growth or lack thereof of the students.

**Telephone Calls**

Clark (1996) added that while simple in concept, a positive phone call program does require time and effort. The teacher needed to think about what to say before making the call and may need to call several times before getting in touch with a parent. LaBahn (1995) noted that since many parents worked during the day, teachers might need to contact parents in the evenings or on weekends. Another limitation noted by LaBahn is that in low socioeconomic households often do not have telephones. A strength of telephone calls was that some teachers may feel more comfortable with this type of communication rather than face-to-face communication with parents.
Research question 3

Research question number 3 was, “What specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom?” In order to answer research question 3, a review of the professional literature was conducted.

Written

Personal Notes

According to Canter (2001), personal notes have the potential to increase teacher/parent communication for two reasons. First, the teacher and parent could write a note when it was convenient for them. Second, the teacher and parent can decide what to write in the note. It could be question about the student’s homework and classroom events. Instead of a question, the note could be information related to the student’s behavior in the classroom or a explaining a situation at home.

Newsletters and E-mails

According the to literature reviewed, newsletters provided parents with information about completed or upcoming classroom learning activities; announce homework for the upcoming week, special projects and test dates. According to Grizzle (1993) these school to home communications were most often used by teachers because it gave the teacher an easy and convenient way to communicate with parents.

Verbal

Open Houses

After reviewing the literature, many studies revealed that parents highly valued face-to-face interactions. Open Houses were especially valued at increasing teacher-
parent communication because it gave teachers a chance to communicate on an individual basis with parents to meet and discuss expectations for the upcoming school year.

*Parent-Teacher Conferences*

During parent teacher conferences, teachers communicated with parents to highlight their children’s progress, accomplishments, difficulties or give parents ideas about guidelines on how to help their children at home. Parent-teacher conferences increased communication by clearing up sources of misunderstandings that might have occurred during the school year. Both teachers and parents had an opportunity to share face-to-face incidents that involved students.

*Telephone Calls*

This strategy increased teacher-parent communication by giving teachers a chance to communicate with parents verbally, rather than trying to explain an incident through a written note. A telephone call, allowed both the teacher and parent to communicate freely, instead of a one-way written communication.

The literature reviewed indicated numerous characteristics of successful communication strategies. Some strategies discussed were, early introduction between parent and teacher, contacting the school and parent involvement. Love (1996) affirmed that communication was the key to developing home-school partnership that played a critical factor in student’s lives.

After reviewing the professional literature, the teacher took into consideration economic status of her school district along with her parents’ work schedule and decided to use the following communication strategies, good notes, newsletters, and parent-initiated notes.
In summary, the research questions were: 1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades? 2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent communication strategies identified in the professional literature? 3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom? 4. Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies? These questions guided the teacher’s project to find, evaluate, and implement communication strategies that could open lines of communication between the classroom and home.

Through this study of literature, the researcher found numerous articles that discussed every aspect of teacher/parent communication. The communication techniques included both verbal and written forms. Different strategies were discussed on how to improve communication between teachers and parents of elementary school children. According to the literature reviewed, when both parents and teachers shared their skills and resources to achieve a common goal, such as the education of young students, the results were personally and professionally rewarding.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade class. The research questions were: 1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades? 2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent strategies identified in the professional literature? 3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom? 4. Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?

Participants

Twenty students and their family members participated in the study. The students were enrolled in a heterogeneous classroom in a rural town located in a Midwest state. Nine children were male and eleven were female. Ten of the participating students were Hispanic, eight were Caucasian, and two were African-American. Of the twenty students, eight were from two-parent homes; eleven from single parent homes and one student lived with grandparents.

Treatment/Intervention

The intervention during this project was the implementation of three specific communication strategies with parents. The communication strategies were: (a) a weekly newsletter, (b) one Good Note was sent home with each child per week, and (c) a parent initiated communication form.
The literature reviewed indicated that in order to open lines of communication, parents needed different forms of contact from the teacher. Love (1996) indicated that all parental/teacher communication was beneficial to the students' learning and development.

**Weekly newsletter**

The first specific communication strategy was a weekly newsletter to inform the parents of classroom activities (see Appendix A). The teacher chose a pamphlet style newsletter with five sections. On the title page were the elementary school's name, and the teacher's name. The second section of the pamphlet listed events of special interest for the parents that were going on in the classroom. An example of a special event would be the Valentine's Day Party. The third section included schoolwork, homework assignments to be expected for the upcoming week. The fourth section of the pamphlet announced the content area of upcoming tests and their respective test dates. In addition to the test dates, test tips were included on how parents could help their children take the Ohio Reading Achievement Test. Finally, the last section included behaviors from the development stages for eight to ten year old children. For example, children's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. During this time, your child might form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
Parent initiated communication form

The second specific communication strategy implemented was a weekly opportunity for the parents to send a note to the teacher. Parents could use the blank form developed by the teacher/researcher to encourage written parental communication. The paper form was separated into two parts. The upper portion was titled I want Mrs. Knowles to know... The lower portion of the paper was titled with, Questions I have for Mrs. Knowles (see Appendix B).

Good Notes

The final intervention strategy implemented was a Good Note form completed by the teacher. The purpose of a Good Note was to communicate to parents an account a student’s good behavior or academic accomplishment. The Good Note form was a four by four-inch decorative piece of paper. The teacher wrote down each student’s name in the upper left corner of the Good Note and placed the stack on her desk. When a student did something particularly good, the teacher took a Good Note with the student’s name written on it and wrote a brief description of the event. At the student’s request, The Good Note was then read aloud to the class at the end of the day and given to the student to take home to show his/her parent.

Instruments and Protocols

Two Daily Contact Logs were developed by the teacher/researcher to collect data to answer the fourth research question, “Did teacher/parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?” The first log was used to establish a baseline of teacher/parent contact (see Appendix C). The second log was used
to collect data of teacher/parent communication during the intervention phase of the project (see Appendix D).

Formatting of each log was identical. After each contact, the student’s name and date were entered on the appropriate Daily Contact Log along with check marks to indicate the type of contact made. The types of contacts tracked for the project were: (a) newsletters sent home (b). Parent–initiated notes, (c) Teacher-initiated notes.

Procedures

Before the study was implemented, the teacher/researcher contacted the school district’s superintendent by telephone to describe the study and ask for permission to conduct the study. A follow up letter was sent to document the conversation between the superintendent and the teacher. (See Appendix E). Then, a meeting was held with the building principal in order to discuss the project. During the meeting with the principal, the teacher/researcher presented the goals of the project, a time line of the study and a sample of the parent letter explaining the project. (See appendix F).

Upon receipt of the principal’s approval, the project was implemented. The parents and grandparents received a letter of explanation before the project started this letter explained them that the teacher/researcher was involved in a Master of Arts educational program. The letter also stated the purpose of the project, and a request of cooperation in helping improve communication; the date and signature were also included. The letter was enclosed in an envelope and sent home with the students.

In order to establish a baseline of teacher/parent contact, the teacher /researcher collected data using the first of the Daily Contact Logs during the pre-intervention phase
of the project. After each teacher/parent contact was made, the teacher made a notation in the log. A notation was made in the log if the contact was initiated either by the parent or by the teacher.

During the intervention phase of the project, the teacher kept track of teacher/parent contacts by making notations in a second Daily Contact Log. A notation was made in this log if the contact was either made first by the parent who used the parent initiated communication form or the teacher using the Good Notes form. In both logs, the purpose of the notations was to collect data that would be used to determine the number of notes initiated by either a parent or the teacher during the pre-intervention and intervention phases of the project. In addition to keeping track of the number of teacher/parent contacts in the Daily Contact Log, the teacher wrote, printed, and sent home a weekly newsletter.

Timeline

The first Daily Contact Log was used to record baseline contact information between the teacher and the parents during the month of February 2006, which was the pre-intervention phase of the project. The intervention phase of the project took place during March of 2006. During this phase, specific communication strategies consisting of the weekly newsletter, Good Notes, and parent initiated communications forms were implemented. Data collection was conducted these two months using the procedures outlined above and concluded at the end of the intervention phase March 31.
Data Analysis

The teacher counted the number of notations that were recorded in the two Daily Contact Logs, one from the pre-intervention phase of the project and the other from the intervention phase. After the counts were made, the teacher compared the pre-intervention phase results to the intervention phase results. The first strategy, parent initiated contact, compared the frequency of contacts from the pre-intervention phase of the project with those made during the intervention phase of the project. The second strategy, Good Notes, was analyzed the same way, by comparing the frequency of contacts initiated by the teacher during the pre-intervention phase of the project with the intervention phase.

Conclusion

With procedures in place, an action research project began in February 2006. In order to answer the research question, did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies; teacher-parent contacts were recorded in Daily Contact Logs. Upon collection of the data, the researcher began to analyze the data and interpret the results.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade class. The research questions were: 1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades? 2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent strategies identified in the professional literature? 3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom? 4. Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?

The reviewed literature provided a number of ways to implement effective communication strategies between teachers and parents for the benefit of students. The literature stated that when parents and teachers shared information, children learned more and parents and teachers felt more supported (Love, 1999). Furthermore, he also stated that good communication could create positive feelings between teachers and parents. In addition, it was found that teachers needed to know about the children's families, language, and culture in order to help children learn. Therefore, from this understanding of the literature, the teacher developed three strategies in order to increase communication between her and the parents of the third grade students. The first was a weekly newsletter, the second was a parent-initiated note, and the third were weekly Good Notes sent home with the students.
Data Results

Research question number 4 was, "Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?" In order to answer this question, the teacher conducted an action research project. For the purpose of this study, the teacher collected data that would be analyzed as a class unit and not as individual students to find the overall increase in communication.

Three specific communication strategies were implemented to increase teacher/parent communication. The first strategy was a weekly newsletter composed by the teacher and sent home weekly every Thursday for four weeks during the implementation phase of the project. The newsletter was composed as in a five-section pamphlet style format, which included in the first section the elementary school’s name, and the teacher’s name. The second section of the pamphlet listed classroom events of special interest for the parents that were going on in the classroom. The third section included schoolwork and homework assignments to be expected for the upcoming week. The fourth section of the pamphlet announced the content area of upcoming tests and their respective test dates. Finally, the last section described behaviors from the development stages for eight to ten year old children. The other two communication strategies were the parent initiated communication form and the teacher initiated Good Notes.

The number of parent initiated contacts that were made using the parent initiated communication forms were recorded in the Daily Contact Logs. During the pre-intervention phase, results indicated that parents initiated contact with the teacher five times. During the intervention phase of the project, parent initiated contacts with the
teacher 47 times using the parent initiated communication forms. These results indicated that parents initiated 42 more contacts during the intervention phase of the project compared to pre-intervention phase. Figure 1 summarizes the number of notes initiated by parents during the pre-intervention and intervention phases of the project.

![Number of Contacts Chart]

**Figure 1. Number of Parent Initiated Contact made during the Pre-intervention and Intervention Phases of the Project**

Correspondingly, the number of teacher initiated contacts recorded in the Daily Contact Logs. During the pre-intervention phase, results indicated that the teacher initiated four contacts in the form of notes that were sent home to a parent. During the intervention phase of the project, the teacher contacted parents 80 times using the Good Notes that were sent home with the students. These results indicated that the teacher initiated 76 more contacts during the intervention phase of the project compared to pre-
intervention phase. Figure 2 summarizes the number of notes initiated by the teacher during the pre-intervention and intervention phases of the project.

Figure 2. Number of Teacher Initiated Contacts made during the Pre-intervention and Intervention Phases of the Project

Summary

The implementation of teacher/parent communication strategies resulted in increased contacts between the teacher and parents of third graders. The three strategies were, a weekly newsletter, parent initiated notes, and teacher initiated Good Notes. Parents initiated 42 more contacts during the intervention phase of the project when compared to the intervention phase. The teacher initiated 76 more contacts to parents during the intervention phase of the project when compared to the intervention phase. The results indicated a noticeable increase in written communication between the teacher and parents when communication strategies were implemented during the intervention phase of the project.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade class. The researcher sought answers to the following questions, 1. According to the literature reviewed, what were the characteristics of teacher/parent communication strategies in elementary grades? 2. What were the strengths and limitations of specific teacher/parent communication strategies identified in the professional literature? 3. According to the literature reviewed, what specific communication strategies would increase teacher-parent communication in a third grade classroom? 4. Did teacher-parent communication increase after the implementation of specific communication strategies?

Meaning of Findings

The findings clearly indicate that the amount of communication between the teacher and parents increased after the implementation of the specific communication strategies. The increase in the written communication between the teacher and parents may be due in part to the teacher’s evaluation of the literature. Throughout the literature, a number of strategies were presented, explained, and discussed by the authors. Upon review of the literature, the teacher selected three strategies that she thought would increase communication between her and the students’ parents. The strategies were selected to maximize communication between the teacher and parents. In this case, the teacher wanted to increase communication with parents, particularly positive communication about their children. On the other hand, if the parents wanted to initiate a note to the teacher, the parent initiated communication form provided a prompt for their
written note. In either case, the strategies did increase the number of written notes that were initiated by parents and the teacher.

**Weekly Newsletters**

The first specific communication strategy was a weekly newsletter to inform the parents of classroom activities. The teacher chose a pamphlet style newsletter with five sections. On the title page were the elementary school’s name, and the teacher’s name. The second section of the pamphlet listed events of special interest for the parents that were going on in the classroom. The third section included schoolwork, homework assignments to be expected for the upcoming week. The fourth section of the pamphlet announced the content area of upcoming tests and their respective test dates. Finally, the last section included behaviors from the development stages for eight to ten year old children. The weekly newsletter was sent home during the four-week project month.

The purpose of the newsletter was to open lines of communication by providing information about classroom activities, events, homework, and test dates. The intent was to inform parents in advance of what was happening in their children’s classroom. The teacher thought that the information may be used by parents to frame questions and comments in their parent initiated notes.

**Parent-Initiated Notes**

One reason that parent-initiated notes increased may be due in part to the parent initiated communication form that was sent home with students on Monday, during intervention phase of the project. With this form, the parents simply had to write down a question they had for the teacher or shared an event that was occurring in their home lives. These parent initiated notes gave parents an opportunity to communicate with the
teacher, about their children’s personal lives, such as, a new puppy in the home and questions that they had for me as their children’s teacher, such as, what time is early dismissal for spring break? In particular, since the intervention phase of the project coincided with third grade Ohio achievement test, parents were able to ask any number of questions about the test. These questions included, the length of the test, ways to prepare their children for taking the test, and what did the results of the test mean for their children.

In the end, using this strategy enabled parents to communicate with the teacher any questions, concerns, or comments they had about their children. In turn, these parent initiated communication forms helped me to better understand the parents, the students, and their lives outside the classroom. On the other hand, the Good Notes informed parents about the good behaviors displayed by their children in the classroom.

Good Notes

For the teacher, a positive outcome of the Good Notes was of that they raised the teacher’s awareness of the students’ good behavior in the classroom. Having to write Good Notes required the teacher to find a good behavior for each student each week. Before the project was implemented, the teacher would not have necessarily noticed students’ positive behaviors and may, in fact, have dwelled upon their more negative behaviors. Overall, the teacher thought that intent of increasing positive communication with parents about their children was accomplished through the implementation of Good Notes.
Summary

The purpose of this project was to implement specific strategies to increase teacher/parent communication in a third grade classroom in a small Midwest city. Three strategies were used to increase communication between the teacher and parents. Those strategies were a weekly newsletter, parent-initiated notes, and Good Notes. The teacher developed these strategies after the review of literature. These three were chosen from numerous proposals because they were most appropriate for the families’ lifestyles.

Two instruments were used to collect data. On the Daily Contact Logs the amount of communication between the teacher and parents was recorded. One log was used to record data for the month of the pre-intervention phase of the project. The other log was used to record data for the four weeks during the intervention phase when the communication strategies were implemented. The data were analyzed by counting and comparing the total of parent initiated notes were received by the teacher and the number of Good Notes sent home by the teacher. The results were that in both comparisons, the total numbers differed noticeably, indicating an increase in communication between the teacher and parents.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this project. First, that appropriate communication strategies must be selected that maximized teacher/parent communication. Second, that in this case, when appropriate communication strategies were implemented consistently, communication between the teacher and parents increased.
Recommendations

At this time, the teacher did not feel a need to change any of the procedures having to do with the two-month long study. The project was completed according to plan without any changes needing to be made. A reason that changes were not needed was the teacher had carefully evaluated the literature and selected strategies that would increase communication between the teacher and parents.

One recommendation the teacher would make would be to develop a questionnaire for parents rating their satisfaction with the communication strategies. In addition to rating the implemented strategies, they could suggest other ways to increase communication between them and the teacher. Another recommendation stemming from the survey, would be for the parents to tell the teacher what type of information they would like to be communicated from the classroom to their homes. This information could include those already mentioned in the newsletter, in addition to how they could be more involved in their children’s classroom activities and school environment. This could serve as another avenue by which teacher and parent communication could be increased.

Another recommendation for further research would be to evaluate which strategies increase communication for specific demographic groups. For example, what strategies increase communication with parents in urban, suburban, or rural areas? Another research question could be, “Does a family’s socioeconomic status have an affect on the number of contacts parents have with teachers?” The published literature offered many suggestions how to communicate with parents, but more information would be helpful on what strategies increase communication for specific parental circumstances.
Conclusions

In this study, which was conducted over a two-month period in the spring semester in a small Midwestern city, specific strategies were implemented with the purpose of increasing the amount of communication between the teacher and parents of third grade students. These strategies were parent initiated communication forms and Good Notes sent written by the teacher. Results indicated that communication between the teacher and parents increased noticeably when two specific strategies were implemented. The teacher believes the appreciable increase in communication may be attributed to the selection of appropriate strategies that were presented in the literature.
In the Know with Knowles

- We finished our Achievement tests!
  The students worked really hard. Good job 3rd graders!

- Welcome to our new student, Ethan
- Popcorn sold Friday
- Wear Green Friday, March 17
- No school March 27-31

School Work to Expect:

- Science test Friday, March 24
- Reading story Why Mosquitoes buzz ...
- Spelling test Wednesday and Friday

Your Child’s Development

At 9 and 10 years of age your child is very much concerned with the demands and constraints of time and space. Your child likes to plan his/her day. As parents, you can enhance their feelings of security by letting your child know what they will be doing each day. This leaves children feeling more in control.
I want Mrs. Knowles to know ...........

Questions or concerns that I have...
Appendix C
Appendix D
### Daily Contact Log During the Project

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Good Note</th>
<th>Notas</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

1. Good Note sent home
2. Notes (P) parent initiated. (T) teacher initiated
Appendix E
Dear Dr. Motel,

I am presently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master of Arts Education degree. During the fall semester I began researching and writing my final project which focuses on increasing parent communication in my third grade classroom. My goal is to implement methods to increase parent communication that will provide a better relationship between home and school and a better educational experience for the students.

There are five sections to my action research project. The first and second sections were completed in December. They consisted of telling why the project was important and researching the literature reviewed to have a better understanding of what others have found. I will start section three in January by first keeping track of parent communication that takes place. Then during the month of March I will implement three strategies that involve parent communication. Sections four and five of the project will be completed in the summer of 2006. It is then I will chart the results and review the findings.

I thank you in advance for being supportive of my goal to earn a Masters of Arts in Education degree.

Sincerely,

Carlie Knowles
Appendix F

In case of special behavior, you did not handle as usual. Please, if you don't have a treat for him, leave paper or a book.

Thank you,
Mrs. Know
Dear Families,

I am presently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master of Arts in Education degree. I will be involving the students and as well as you in order to complete my final project. My goal is to enhance our classroom through this course work. Starting next week and on every Tuesday for the rest of the year, I will be sending home an important piece of paper home with your child. There will be two sections to this paper. The top portion will say; I want Mrs. Knowles to know.... Please feel free to inform me of anything going on at home that you think is important in your child's life. It could be behavioral problems, a change in their usual routine or something as easy as a fun activity you did together over the weekend. The second section will say; Questions for Mrs. Knowles. Please write any questions you have for me. I will try to answer back that day. If you don't have any questions, just leave that section blank. The children will receive a treat for bringing back this paper to me each week. Please take a few minutes to complete the paper each week, and help in the decaying process of your child's teeth!

Thank you for your cooperation,

Mrs. Knowles