Parents’ and Teachers’ Perceptions of Home-School Journaling as an Effective Method for Two-Way Communication and Collaboration

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Parent’s and Teacher’s Perceptions of Home-School Journaling as an Effective Method of Two-Way Communication and Collaboration

by

Tabitha Fidanza

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education of the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Childhood Literacy

July 31, 2012
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It was Friday and my residential students were only hours away from getting on their buses to make the long journey home for the weekend (average bus ride is two hours). This was my first Friday in my long-term substitute teaching classroom. It was my planning period, so I ask my classroom staff where the home-school journals were, as I was accustomed to writing a lengthy letter in each student’s journal for them to take home to their parents from past experiences at the school. My classroom staff responded by telling me that this teacher writes a newsletter and places one in each home-school journal instead of writing in each journal. I was stumped, because I had always witnessed each teacher writing a personal message in each journal. I had spent countless hours doing the same. So, I began to type the same newsletter to place in each student’s home-school journal, as the parents in this classroom were already accustomed to this procedure. It was easy! But why did this teacher choose this method of communication? Was it because it was an easy, time efficient way to communicate or an effective way to communicate with parents/guardians?

Significance of the Problem

Epstein and Dauber (1991) break parent involvement into six categories: (1) parenting, (2) communication, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaboration with the community. Recent research suggests that communication is the most frequently used form of parent involvement utilized to share information between school and home (Hirsto, 2010). Up to ninety percent of parents receive one-way communication like “newsletters, memos, or notes addressed to all parents [opposed] to individualized communication [which is] much less common”
Parent involvement has been extensively researched and has been proven to be highly beneficial to student achievement. In fact, when it comes to academic success parent involvement carries more weight than socioeconomic status or background (Department of Education, 2004). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires parental involvement, where parental involvement is defined as the “participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (Department of Education, p. 3, 2004). The foundation of parental involvement is two-way communication; however, NCLB does not specifically state how to accomplish this. Two-way communication leads to greater parental involvement, which in turn increases student success (Adams, 2010). Little research has been done on two-way communication between parents and teachers (Adams).

In the past, the most popular forms of communication between home and school included school newsletters, parent/teacher conferences, students themselves, and report cards (Cattermole & Robinson, 1985). Surprisingly little has changed for communication in present times. One-way forms of communications, such as newsletters and report cards are often a tempting way for teachers to communicate with parents. However, one-way communication does not require or encourage thoughtful responses, because it is impersonal. Often, parents are “recipients of information” (Hirsto, 2010, p. 105). Merely sending parents information is not a sufficient form of communication. Communication implies a reciprocal relationship, where information flows two ways—between home and school. Communication is individualized when it is two-way such as face to face conversations (Farrell & Collier, 2010).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of two-way communication using home-school journals that are written on a regular basis. Teachers and residential staff at my school invested a significant amount of time and effort journaling to parents. Teachers and many parents had to make time in their busy schedules to write thoughtful or important information in these journals. Teachers spent an hour or more per week writing in home-school journals. Some teachers spent as many as three hours per week writing in home-school journals. It is important to find the benefits and areas in need of improvement when using a two-way communication method like journaling. As an educator, it is my job to establish and maintain an effective two-way communication system with the parents of my students. I will use information found in my study to improve my communication with parents. My research questions included:

- What are parent’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What are teacher’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What observable effects does home-school journaling have on parent-teacher collaboration?

Study Approach

In this qualitative study, I collected the following data over a period of six weeks: Parent Questionnaires, Teacher Questionnaires, and content from home-school journals. I analyzed and categorized all data using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where I coded all data to develop themes. My study included three data collection methods. First, I put Teacher Questionnaires in the mailbox of every teacher who consented to the study. Second, I randomly sent home questionnaires to eighteen
parents to gain insight on their perceptions of the home-school journal. Third, I examined the content of two home-school journals.

**Rationale**

In my school, teachers are required to use home-school journals to provide parents with information. However, teachers are not provided with writing or content guidelines for writing in home-school journals. Teachers are not required to write in depth information, although most teachers do. Few teachers opt to simply include a weekly newsletter in place of a hand written note. I feel that it is highly beneficial to investigate parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal. Communication should be open-ended, appealing, and beneficial to all parties, specifically students and parents (Farrell, 2010). Through the findings of this study, it is my goal to improve my communication with parents, to promote parent involvement and student achievement. I want to use the best method of communication with parents to promote parent involvement and academic success. Through investigating teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal, I hoped to learn if certain components of the home-school journal are more beneficial than others, if parents prefered a different or additional form of communication, and if the journals showed any evidence of collaboration.

**Definition of Terms**

No Child Left Behind is “an act to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (U.S. Department, 2008).
Home-school journals, at the school where I teach, are notebooks that are used as a form of communication between school and home. They are sent home every Friday and come back with the students on Monday.

Summary

Parent involvement has been extensively researched and has been proven to be very beneficial when it comes to student achievement (Department of Education, 2004, Epstein, 1986, Farrell, 2010). Parent involvement in schools is not a new concept, but has recently been placed under the microscope following requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Among the six categories of parent involvement, communication is the most common form and possibly the most important. This study investigated the perceptions of parents and teachers. Through analyzing Teacher Questionnaires, I gained new insights about the home-school journal and compared teachers’ responses to parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal. After collecting and analyzing data from parent questionnaires, I refined and further developed my communication skills to best meet the needs of parents and students. I utilized the results of this study to improve my communication with parents.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Communication is the most frequent form of parental involvement utilized in schools (Hirsto, 2010). Parent involvement is one of the most powerful tools shown to increase student achievement (Adams, 2010, Department of Education, 2004, Epstein, 1986, Hirsto, 2010). Moreover, most parents do not typically become involved in their child’s schooling through other modes of parental involvement such as volunteering at school, making instructional decisions, or collaborating with the community through joining organizations like a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (Hirsto). This study is an investigation into teachers’, parents’, and residential staff’s perceptions of unique, yet uncommon two-way communication system—home-school communication journals. This section is organized into four subtopics: ecological framework, parent involvement, communication, and collaboration.

Ecological Framework

According to Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory, young children’s development is highly effected by five different, yet interrelated systems. People typically form a unique relationship to their environment. The five ecological systems include Microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. Of Bronfenbrenner’s five ecological systems, three systems are key to this study: Microsystems, exosystems, and mesosystems. These three systems influence home-school communication. Microsystems are systems that the child physically interacts with and typically spends a large amount of time in, such as school, home, and daycare. A mesosystem includes more than one microsystem, where different microsystems interact. For example, members of different microsystems may attend a
gathering at a child's home or a family may attend an event at school. Exosystems are settings or practices that affect a person, although they are not physically in the setting at the time or possibly never (neighborhood, television, transportation system, war). Communication systems are also exosystems. Schools often have unique sets of communication systems that may include informational letters, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, classroom websites, emails, and/or teacher notes. These communication systems affect parents, although they typically have little input in choosing the communication system. Systems like school communication systems are shaped by the people within the system, but again parents rarely choose the communication medium (Epstien, 1986).

However, Bronfenbrenner (1977) found that systems can be restructured. In his research, he found that altering microsystems greatly influences child development. One of his studies included two groups of premature babies born to mothers with extremely low socioeconomic status. Premature babies in the experimental group were given special attention by nurses to simulate a nurturing home. These babies gained weight more rapidly and by age one, on average, had an IQ that was ten points higher than babies in the control group. When the babies in the experimental group were well enough to go home, mothers were given extra support through having regular contact with a social worker. Thus, changing the structure of more than one environment may have been a contributing factor in the development of the children in the experimental group.

**Influence on academic achievement.** Bronfenbrenner (1977) also suggests that when two or more systems work together, there is a more powerful result. This reiterates
what numerous research has found—parent involvement produces higher academic achievement (Adams, 2010, Department of Education, 2004, Epstein, 1986, Hirsto, 2010). Therefore, a strong communication system among microsystems can lead to higher academic achievement. Adams (2010) found that a home-note program increased students’ social skills. In this study, parents and teachers formed a partnership through home-notes, to improve the generalization of social skills. Teachers and other school personnel taught different social skills at school and parents reinforced the social skills at home. In this way, a mesosystem was created between home and school, which Bronfenbrenner attributes to increased results. In Adams’ study, the home-notes proved to be an effective mode of communication that enabled students to improve social skills. Circumstances or events that occur in one microsystem can affect a child’s behavior and development in another—this makes communication essential.

**Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement is among the top contributors of student achievement (Department of Education, 2004, Epstein, 1986, Farrell, 2010). In fact, when it comes to academic success, parental involvement carries more weight than other characteristics associated with academic success, such as race and socioeconomic status (Department of Education, 2004, Epstein, 1986, Farrell, 2010). Parental involvement is currently mandated by the No Child Left Behind act of 2001. No Child Left Behind defines parental involvement vaguely; there are no specific guidelines for schools to implement in the area of communication that would increase parental involvement. School administrators and educators are left with the dilemma of researching and implementing
their own effective methods of communication to increase parental involvement (Department of Education, 2004).

Parental involvement is complex. Epstein and Dauber (1991) break parent involvement into six categories: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaboration with the community. Recent research shows that communication is the most frequent form of parental involvement in schools (Hirsto, 2010). Although Title 1 Part A of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) specifically defines parent involvement in terms of two-way communication (rather than one-way communication), it merely states subjectively broad guidelines to involve parents in their children's education. Teachers are undoubtedly endowed with the greatest responsibility. Moreover, schools do send home parent information, but teachers, in order to be effective, must act as a liaison between home and school. Teachers form relationships with families through two-way communication.

**Communication**

Communication is the most frequent mode of parent involvement. In the past, the most popular forms of communication between home and school included school newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, students themselves, and report cards (Cattermole & Robinson 1985). Currently little has changed; a large majority of parents receive impersonal one-way forms of communication (newsletters and notes addressed to all parents), despite research suggesting that the foundation of effective parental involvement has evolved to two-way communication (Farrell, 2010). Surprisingly, little research has been done on two-way home-school communication (Adams, 2010, Cattermole, 1985). NCLB does not mandate a specific mode of communication to
involve parents, but recognizes too that reciprocal, two-way communication is effective when it takes place on a regular basis, is meaningful, and is centered on learning and other school related activities (Department of Education, 2004). Two-communication leads to greater parental involvement which in turn increases student success (Adams, 2010).

Farrell (2010) investigated teachers’ perceptions of home-school communication and found that home-school communication is essential to increased student achievement. The study took place at two elementary schools in Connecticut, near a military base. Schools in this area had a re-entry rate of 58.5 due to a high military population. There were fifteen participants in this study. All participants were educators; ten educators were teachers. Data was collected through interviews. In this study, most mothers walked their children to school which likely enabled them to establish frequent two-way communication systems. Often, parents had face-to-face conversations with their child’s teacher on a daily basis. Results showed that teachers expressed no preference for other modes of communication, but did state that parent-teacher conferences as an inefficient way to communicate. Although a two-way communication system often requires more time, the end result is enhanced student achievement. In addition, Farrell found that it was important for parents and teachers to establish common grounds for the type and frequency of communication.

**Collaboration**

Communication forms a bridge to collaboration (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Adams (2010) found a reciprocal relationship between communication and collaboration; communication led to collaboration and collaboration led to communication. In his
study, a home-note program was used to teach, reinforce and generalize social skills using positive behavior supports. Participants included 107 parents who were randomly selected. All participants’ children attended a suburban elementary school in the Intermountain West. In this study, the school focused on one social skill each month. Week one, the teacher introduced the social skill. Week two, parent volunteers taught a lesson. Week three, the librarian taught a lesson utilizing literature. Week four, the teacher reinforced the social skill. Teachers communicated and collaborated with parents by sending home monthly notes that described the monthly social skill, listed steps for the skill, included an activity, and requested parents to sign the note and return it to school with their child. Children were also encouraged to participate in the monthly home-notes. If 85% of the class returned the signed home-note, the class was given recognition and a special prize or treat. Data in this study was collected through evaluation surveys completed by teachers, parents, and students at the end of the year. Surveys were differentiated for the students based on their grade level. For example, pictorial expressive faces were used for students in kindergarten through second grade. Qualitative and quantitative data analyses were used. Results show that teachers, parents, and students held positive attitudes of the monthly home-notes program. Parents and students also rated the program effective in improving students’ social skills. Some participants felt that the program was too time consuming.

Adams’ (2010) research shows that parents respond positively when they are invited to participate in their child’s education. However, teachers have the primary role of initiating and maintaining communication with parents (Adams, 2010, Farrell, 2010, Wanat, 2010). Like Adams, Wanat recognizes that parent involvement results in
increased academic achievement. Although both Adams and Wanat agree that parent involvement results in increased achievement, they do not agree on the type of parent involvement that yields such results. Wanat’s study focuses on volunteering, making decision, and collaboration with the community. She found that parents want an invitation to participate in their child’s education. Twenty parents participated in this study. All participants’ children attended a kindergarten through grade twelve public school in the United States. All participants participated in an interview to share their perceptions of parent involvement. Wanat found that dissatisfied parents did not volunteer at school or join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) but helped their child with learning activities at home. This is contrary to Adams’ findings. Wanat’s study does not provide any evidence of home-school collaboration that takes place in the child’s home, which may be a limitation of Wanat’s study. It may not be possible or appealing for all parents to join a PTA or volunteer during school hours, although parents who did so tended to be satisfied with home-school communication.

Wanat (2010) found that parents were satisfied with home-school collaboration if they communicated often with teachers, were active in the PTA, and volunteered in the classroom. Satisfied parents in this study viewed meaningful parent involvement as occurring in one microsystem—school. She found that the PTA was a powerful mode of collaboration. Wanat’s study exemplifies the need for regular two-way communication system. Adams’ (2010) agrees that parents want to be included in decision making and program implementation, but we must be sensitive to the needs and views of parents to increase parental involvement (Hirsto, 2010, Farrell, 2010). After all, some research has shown that a very small percentage of parents participate in their child’s education via
volunteering, make policy decisions, and collaborating with the community (Hirsto). The findings of both Adam’s and Wanat’s studies yielded that collaboration through two-way communication is an important, and possibly essential, component of academic success. However, as research has found that only a small percentage of parents become involved in their children’s education by volunteering, a home-note program may be more successful in increasing parent involvement and student achievement.

Summary

Communication can be time consuming, but is undoubtedly an important linkage to parent involvement and collaboration. It is clear, that when multiple systems interact, systems can be altered. In education, when communication between home and school (mircosystems) is meaningful (two-way), personal, and frequent, academic achievement can be altered or enhanced. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) research with disadvantaged premature babies shows that development can be altered when more than one microsystem is altered or changed. Like the babies in Bronfenbrenner’s study, it may be possible to alter the development of children with disabilities when more than one of their microsystems is altered or changed. Communication (mesosystem) is a powerful way to alter student achievement. Two-way communication, like the home-note program and face-to-face conversations produce greater results than one-way communication like newsletters and notes that are addressed to all parents. Two-way communication is reciprocal and initiates a response. Moreover, a home-note program has been shown to be an effective form of collaboration and communication. A home-note program is effective for two reasons. First, a large majority of parents prefer to be involved in their children’s education through communication. Second, home-notes are a form of two-
way communication that initiates a response from parents. Decision making organizations like PTAs can also be a positive way for parents to become involved. One drawback of PTAs is that only a small percentage of parents choose to join such organizations. Communication is at the foreground of parent involvement with the majority of parents choosing it as the most preferable mode of parent involvement.
Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

This study was designed to investigate teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal. In addition, this study investigated observable effects that home-school journaling had on parent and teacher collaboration. In this chapter, I will discuss participants and context, positionality as the researcher, data collection and analysis, procedures, criteria for trustworthiness, and limitations. Constant comparative methods and procedures were utilized to answer the research questions:

- What are parent’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What are teacher’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What observable effects does home-school journaling have on parent-teacher collaboration?

Participants and Context

This study took place at a school that teaches students with multiple and severe disabilities in the Eastern United States of America. It was a residential school, where the school’s population was very diverse. The student population background included Caucasian, African American, Korean, Hispanic, and Indian. The school was located in a city school district, where students were from urban, suburban, and rural areas. Students’ family socioeconomic status was also diverse, ranging from poverty to upper middle class. Participants in this study included five classroom teachers and the parents of eight students ages thirteen to twenty-one.

Positionality as the Researcher

I have worked at the school for almost two years, holding the following positions: per diem substitute teacher, summer school teacher, and long-term classroom teacher. I
am certified to teach children with disabilities from birth through twelfth grade and
English language arts, grades seven to twelve. I am currently finishing a Master’s
program in childhood literacy at a SUNY college. Communication plays a central role in
establishing a strong relationship between home and school (Farrell, 2010). Home-
school communication becomes increasingly important when students spend the majority
of their week at a residential school that may be far from their homes. With that in mind,
I feel that it is imperative to use the best form of home-school communication.
Communication needs to be two-way rather than one-way (Department of Education,
2004). My school utilizes a unique form of two-way communication. My school uses
home-school communication journals, which allow an open dialog among teachers,
parents, and residential child care staff. These journals are very time consuming and
detailed. With so much time spent writing in home-school journals, I conducted this
research because I wanted to make sure that home-school journals are the best form of
communication in a residential school setting that teaches students with multiple to
severe disabilities.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, multiple forms of data were collected and analyzed to answer the
research questions. Data collection included Teacher Questionnaire (N=5), Parent
Questionnaires (N=8), and content from the home-school journals of two students. To
keep data collection manageable, I put recruitment letters and consent forms in every
teachers’ mailbox (9). All who consented were included in the study. I randomly send
18 parent recruitment letters and consent forms home with students. Parent recruitment
letters, parent consent forms, and envelopes were sent home with 18 students. Eight
parents returned the consent letters in a sealed envelope in their child's home-school journal to school. All envelopes were placed in my mailbox. Lastly, I received informed consent (Appendix A) and analyzed the contents of two home-school journals. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All data was coded and organized into major themes.

Teacher questionnaires. Teacher Questionnaires were completed by five teachers who consented to the study. Teachers were provided the Teacher Questionnaires before they consented to the study, so they could make a more informed decision. (Refer to Appendix B for Teacher Questionnaire.) Teachers were asked to provide examples of both advantages and disadvantages of the home-school journal. Teachers were asked how they utilized the journal. They were also requested to give examples of the type of content that they typically include to share with parents. Not only did teachers discuss their perceptions of the home-school journal, but they speculated parents' perceptions of the home school journal. Responses to each Teacher Questionnaire was analyzed and coded to develop themes. Next, I categorized codes to find commonalities and differences. Finally, I compared codes across all interviews to collapse, expand, and/or refine codes to examine major themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Parent questionnaires. Parents who granted consent were sent parent questionnaires (Appendix C) to investigate their perceptions of the home-school journal. Parents wrote their responses and returned questionnaires to the school in a sealed envelope. Parents were asked to rate the home-school journal and asked if the home-school journal was the best form of communication for them. They were asked to list what they liked and disliked about the journal. Parents were also asked how teachers
responded to suggestions parents had given teachers. Data was analyzed using similar methods to interview data analysis. All parent questionnaires were analyzed and coded to yield themes. I coded each piece of data, question by question. I compared codes across all parent questionnaires and collapsed, expanded, and refined codes to examine major themes using a constant comparative method (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Parental perceptions were analyzed and compared to teachers’ perceptions to look for commonalities and differences.

**Home-school journals.** All content in home-school journals were read and analyzed to find content themes. For example, I examined data to answer the following questions. Do all teachers and parents write about similar topics? Do teachers tend to write about academic achievement, while parents ask questions or discuss social events that occurred over the weekend? How do teachers respond to parent requests or information in general? I coded all data and categorized data into observable themes. I found observable effects that home-school journals had on parent-teacher collaboration.

**Procedures**

The first week of my study, I sent the Parent Questionnaires home to parents who had given consent. The second week of my study, I placed Teacher Questionnaires in the mailboxes of teachers who had given consent. The third week of my study, I began analyzing Parent Questionnaires that parents had returned to school. The fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks of my study I organized and began analyzing Teacher Questionnaires and gathered content from two home-school journals. Content gathered from the home-school journals included content that was written within six weeks of data collection. I gathered content from home-school journals by taking notes of relevant content, as
photocopying passages was not permitted due to school privacy policies. At the conclusion of six weeks of data collection, I began to analyze all data using a constant comparative method.

**Criteria for Trustworthiness**

There has been little research in the area of effective communication between home and school using communication journals. To ensure participant privacy, this study does not include a detailed description of participants and context. However, a description of the research process is detailed and open to analysis. All data collection methods have been customized for this study and are included in the appendixes. A detailed summary of the findings has been included for review. I planned to share findings with administration at my school for review.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited, in that there were few participants, data was collected at only one school, and the length of the study was six weeks. The study was also limited in that it is a qualitative study; data is subjective and open to scrutiny. All questionnaires were confidential. However, some participants may have felt uncomfortable honestly answering questions found within the questionnaires. Some participants may have worried about giving the right answer, worried about confidentiality, or felt that the researcher may have judged them based on their answers. Participant honesty may have compromised validity.

**Summary**

In this qualitative study, it was my goal to analyze the perceptions of multiple stakeholders in academic achievement. As communication is typically the most frequent
form of parent involvement, educators should have a vested interest in parents’, teachers’,
and other school personnel’s perceptions of communication. Using a constant
comparative method was likely the most reliable method to analyze data in this study.
However, like other studies that rely heavily on qualitative data, the greatest limitation
may have been participant honesty.
Chapter 4: Findings

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of two-way communication using home-school journals. This study took place at a residential school for students with multiple disabilities in the eastern United States. A communication method like journaling can be very time consuming for both teachers and parents. Subsequently, I feel that it is important to find the benefits and areas in need of improvement when using a two-way communication method like journaling. I hope to use information found in my study to improve my communication with parents. My research questions included

- What are parent’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What are teacher’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What observable effects does home-school journaling have on parent-teacher collaboration?

Findings

After analyzing Teacher Questionnaires, Parent Questionnaires, and home-school journal content, six themes emerged: 1) preference for communication; 2) positive parental perceptions; 3) improving communication; 4) collaboration; 5) parent participation influences teacher perception; 6) good communication is personal and individual. Nine teachers work at this school. Five teachers anonymously completed the Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix B). Eight parents anonymously completed the Parent Questionnaire (Appendix C). The content from two home-school journals written during a six-week period was analyzed by the researcher. Data collected from the Parent
Questionnaire yielded theme 1, preference for communication; theme 2, positive parental perceptions; and theme 3, improving communication. Data analysis of Teacher Questionnaires, Parent Questionnaires, and home-school journal content formed theme 4, collaboration. Theme 5, parent participation influences teacher perception, emerged from teachers' responses in the Teacher Questionnaire. Data collected from both the Teacher Questionnaires Parent Questionnaires yielded theme 6, good communication is personal and individual.

**Theme 1: preference for communication.** In the Parent Questionnaire, parent responses to questions 1, 2, and 7 indicated that parents strongly prefer the home-school journal as a mode of communication. When parents were asked if the journal was the best way to communicate with their children's teacher and dorm staff, four parents indicated that it was the best form of communication. Three parents responded somewhat positively, but did not clearly indicate that the home-school journal was the best form of communication. For example, one parent responded by saying “yes, for the most part, but it is written at the end of the week...” and another parent's response was “not sure it is the best way but it is a great way...” There were no negative responses that indicated that the home-school journal was not a good form of communication. Parent responses to question 7 reflected positive parental perceptions of the home-school journal. Four parents rated the journal “love it” and four parents rated the journal “good.”

Responses to question 2 of the Parent Questionnaire revealed that parents prefer multiple forms of communication. The table below illustrates parents' preferences among six different types of communication.
When parents were given a list that included six different forms of home-school communication (classroom newsletter, teacher phone calls, notes, email, informational letters from the school, and home school journals), the majority of parents selected three or more forms of communication that were best for them. Only one parent opted to choose only one form of communication. The data concluded that home-school journals and teacher phone calls were the most highly preferred forms of communication for parents. Moreover, every parent who preferred the home-school journal also preferred teacher phone calls. The second most preferred form of communication was email. Classroom newsletters were the least preferred form of communication. Only two parents included classroom newsletters among their preferences for home-school communication. Parents had many different reasons for choosing their preferred styles of communication. Parents preferred certain communication modes over others based on their schedules, enjoyment, convenience, necessity, or because behavior information was included. The
majority of parents preferred communication that was individualized and specific to their children and in one case, specific to the child’s classroom. One parent commented, “It gives me a daily look at what my child does that only pertains to him.” Another parent wanted the teacher to continue to write information on his child’s “overall mood, toileting information, breakfast and lunch information, and non-emergency health issues [like] seizures and coughing.”

**Theme 2: positive parental perceptions.** Parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal. Parents liked many aspects about the journal. Question three of the “Parent Questionnaire” asked parents to specify what they liked about the journals. Every parent responded by writing one or more positive comments about the journal. One parent wrote, “The journal is also a written record. We can go back and look up something from a day, a week, or a year ago.” Another parent liked that the home-school journal allowed him to “communicate when [he was] unable to speak directly to staff during the day and [was a form of] open communication with all staff.” Parents liked that the journal was personal, individual, insightful, open communication, sharing of information, a good mode of communication when unable to speak directly, concerns and wants of parents were made known, a written record that could be referenced, filled voids for children who were non-verbal, and parents could be a part of what was going on. Five of the eight parents specifically stated that they liked the journals because they were individual or personal. Three parents included the word “personal” and two parents included the word “individual.” Other parents conveyed that they liked personal and individual characteristics of the journal by saying things like “It gives me a daily look at what my child does that only pertains to [him/her].”
Parents like to read about a vast number of topics that teachers include in the home-school journals. Parents were asked to list information that they would like to continue to see in their children’s journal (question three of the Parent Questionnaire). All parents responded to this question. The majority of parents (four or more) wanted teachers to continue to include information on behavior/emotion, diet, toileting, activities completed or participated in, and medical information. Two parents wanted to read about their children’s educational progress and two parents wanted to continue to read about sleeping habits. One parent wrote that he wanted to continue to see information on “educational achievement, any emotional episode, outdoor activities, [and] routine activities about eating, drinking, toileting, and sleeping.” Another parent wanted to continue to read about his/her child’s “care, needs, problems, concerns, and anything about [him/her].” Other responses to question three on the Parent Questionnaire included outdoor activities; items needed for student at school; and needs, problems, and concerns.

**Theme 3: improving communication.** Although all parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal, teachers still had room to improve their communication skills. When answering question 3 of the Parent Questionnaire, parents disclosed numerous types of information that they would like to see in their children’s home-school journals. Additional information that parents would like to see in their children’s home-school journal included advanced notice of fieldtrips, incident review reports, the number of minutes their children spent in a stander (for child in wheelchair), new vocalizations, arrival and departure times for special holidays, what goes on during the week, and notes that are not short and vague. Only two parents had one response in common; both commented that they would like to see advanced notice for fieldtrips in
their children’s journal. In the preceding list, parents did not have any other comments that were similar. Parents’ varied responses to question 3 of the parent questionnaire reflect the individual nature of the home-school journals. Individual characteristics of a child influences home-school journal content.

Parents cited aspects about the journals that they disliked. In fact, five of eight parents wrote at least one dislike when responding to question 5 of the Parent Questionnaire. Parents disliked the following about the home-school journals: staff may forget to write a note, staff may forget to send a journal home, there were privacy issues because the wrong journal was sent home twice, a parent may forget to send it back to school, and inconsistencies. Each of the preceding dislikes about the journal may be due to human error, neglect, and/or an insufficient amount of time for teachers to write in the home-school journals.

Theme 4: collaboration. The majority of participants in this study felt that the home-school journal was a pathway for collaboration. Analysis of the Parent Questionnaire, Teacher Questionnaire, and actual content from journals led to this finding. Parents were asked both to list examples of suggestions that they made to their children’s teacher and to state if changes were made as a result of the suggestions (question six in the Parent Questionnaire). Six parents answered this question. All six parents wrote suggestions to their children’s teacher, and as a result many changes were made. When parents were asked if their children’s teacher made any changes as a result of their suggestion(s), one parent commented “some, not always,” another commented “many times,” and the remaining four responded with “yes” and gave specific examples. The most common suggestion parents gave to teachers concerned their children’s
behavior. Most parents did not elaborate on what they meant by behavior. Only one parent included a specific element of her child’s behavior that needed to be addressed by the teacher. This parent wanted the teacher to take proactive steps to reduce her child’s inappropriate vocalizations. Other suggestions included wheelchair adjustments, reminders about student appointments, requests for the teacher to relay specific information to other school staff on a parent’s behalf, like medication changes and toileting.

Most of the teachers in this study utilized the home-school journal to collaborate with parents. One teacher felt that collaboration could be accomplished with teacher phone calls rather than the home-school journal. Teachers shared information about students to parents and parents provided teachers with further information about their children (question six of the Teacher Questionnaire). Many teachers used the home-school journal to gather additional information about their students. Teachers used this information to make academic decisions. One teacher commented that he/she shares information about students and asks parents for input on what they would like to see their children doing. Another teacher commented that he/she provides parents with strategies to increase their children’s skills at home. A teacher commented, “In my experience, parent-teacher collaboration happens every day when we share daily info in the book to each other.” Another teacher wrote, “In some cases it’s the only way to get a response or find any information about a student.”

The content of two home-school journals was analyzed in this study. There was evidence of collaboration in both journals. The discourse in both journals was somewhat similar in that there was similar content and both journals were fluid like a conversation.
The teachers shared child specific information and asked friendly personal follow-up questions about family members and personal care staff in the home. Both teachers provided academic information and progress made throughout each week. Parents tended to provide personal information specific to the home environment. Parents wrote about weekend events and activities. One of the parents thanked staff for helping his child learn and grow and commented that he enjoyed “talking” to the teacher. The other parent informed the teacher of a time and day that she would pick her child up for an appointment, discussed medical information, and post-secondary plans (examples of post-secondary plans include college, group home, and day habilitation program). There was evidence of collaboration on major decision making in the second journal—post-secondary plans. Across several dates both parties responded to information about post-secondary plans and provided additional information to the other party.

**Theme 5: parent participation influences teacher perception.** Teachers correlated parents’ perceptions of the journal with parents choosing to either write back to teachers or not write back to teachers in the home-school journal. Data analysis of multiple questions in the Teacher Questionnaire yielded this theme. Teachers perceived parents’ perceptions of the journal as negative if the parents did not participate by writing to the teachers in the journal. One teacher commented that it was “a waste of time” to write in journals if parents did not write back. Another teacher commented that “information sent is useless” when parents did not respond. This teacher did not think that these parents even read notes in the journal. The teacher felt that it was beneficial to write in journals only if the parents responded. Three teachers felt that one of the drawbacks of the journal was that some parents did not respond back. One teacher felt
that parents had a very positive perception of the journal and liked using the journals to communicate. Every parent in this teacher’s classroom wrote/responded in the journal on a regular basis. The teacher reported feeling “extremely lucky because parents write back regularly.” This teacher also felt that the parents of children in the class were “extremely involved” because they shared information in the journals.

**Theme 6: good communication is personal and individual.** Parents and teachers agreed that good communication was personal and individual, though they may not have agreed with each other on which mode of communication was the most personal and individual. Interestingly, the research questionnaires contained no questions regarding journals being personal or individual. Four of the five teachers who participated in this study described communication as being personal and individual. Three of the four teachers actually used the word “personal.” However, these four teachers did not all agree that the journal was personal. Three teachers felt that the journal was a personal form of communication and one teacher felt that phone calls were more personal than the journal.

Despite teachers’ perceptions of the journal, every parent in this study described the journal as personal and individual; three of the eight parents used the word “personal” and/or individual when discussing things that they liked about the journal. Parents discussed personal and individualized information about their children throughout the “Parent Questionnaire.” Parents listed personal information that they liked to read about in the journal, individualized information they would like to be included in the journal, and discussed personalized information when they were asked how they felt about the journal. For example, one parent responded to question four with, “it gives me a daily
look at what my child does that only pertains to [him/her].” Another parent’s response to question three included, “we need to communicate information related to my child’s healthcare.” Analysis of actual journal content was found to be both personal and individual as well. Both journals primarily contained information that was specific to the children. The teachers did not just simply list activities that the student participated in. They noted the student’s favorite activities, activities that the student excelled at during the week, and areas in need of improvement.

Summary

Parents in this study had positive perceptions of the home-school journal. The majority of parents felt that the journal was one of the best ways to communicate with their children’s teachers. However, most parents prefer multiple forms of communication (see Table 1). The home-school journal and teacher phone calls were the most preferred forms of communication, but most parents preferred teachers to utilize several additional forms of communication such as emails, teacher phone calls, and informational letters from the school. Parents liked the information that teachers wrote about in the journals. However, parents reported there was room for teachers to improve their communication with parents. Parents listed additional information that they would like teachers to include in the journal. Moreover, parents expressed aspects about the journal that they did not like. In one instance, there was a privacy issue, as a journal was sent home to the wrong parent. Other parents disliked when staff forgot to write a note or send the journal home, when the parent forgets to send it back to school, and inconsistencies in general.

Compared to parents, teachers had very different perceptions of the home-school journal. Teachers’ perceptions of the journal were contingent on parents writing in the
journal. Teachers felt writing in the journals was a waste of time if parents did not write back in the journal. When parents wrote back to teachers, teachers felt positive about the journal. Even so, parents and teachers agreed that good communication was personal and individual. Most of the participants in this study felt that the journals met the criteria for being personal and individual. Parents and teachers included personal and individual information when writing in the journals. In return, parents liked to read information that was specific to their children. There was evidence that home-school journals enabled parent-teacher collaboration as well. Parents and teachers agreed that collaboration was a result of sharing information in the journals. An analysis of journal content provided further evidence of collaboration.

The analysis of the Parent Questionnaire, Teacher Questionnaire, and home-school journal content produced multiple conclusions. First, parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal, but felt that teachers could improve aspects of the home-school journal. Secondly, teachers perceived good communication as being personal and individual, but individual teachers’ perceptions of the home-school journal varied. Lastly, the home-school journal was an effective mode of parent-teacher collaboration for students with disabilities.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of two-way communication using home-school journals that were written on a regular basis. This study took place at a residential school for students with multiple disabilities in the eastern United States. Approximately sixty students were enrolled at the school and nine classroom teachers were employed by the school. Five teachers and eight parents participated in the study. Three types of data were collected: Parent Questionnaires (N=8), Teacher Questionnaires (N=5), and journal content from home-school journals (N=2). Data was collected during a six week period. A constant comparative method was utilized to analyze data. All data was coded and organized into six major themes: 1) preference for communication; 2) positive parental perceptions; 3) improving communication; 4) collaboration; 5) parent participation influences teacher perception; 6) good communication is personal and individual. My research questions included:

- What are parent’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What are teacher’s perceptions of home-school journaling?
- What observable effects does home-school journaling have on parent-teacher collaboration?

An analysis of the data yielded four conclusions: 1) parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal; 2) parents felt that teachers could improve aspects of the home-school journal; 3) teachers perceived good communication as being personal and individual, but individual teachers’ perceptions of the home-school journal varied; 4) the
home-school journal was an effective mode of parent-teacher collaboration for students with disabilities.

Conclusions

Parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal. The majority of parents who participated in this study felt that the home-school journal and teacher phone calls were the best forms of communication between parents and teachers. Parents tended to choose modes of communication that were two-way and more personal. Every parent who preferred the home-school journal also preferred teacher phone calls. The second most preferred form of communication was email. Classroom newsletters were the least preferred form of communication. All of the parents wrote positive feedback about the journals. In fact, half of the parents rated the journal “love it” and the other half rated the journal “good.” Like the teachers in the study, parents also liked the journals because they were personal and individual to their children. One parent commented, “It gives me a daily look at what my child does that only pertains to him.” Another parent simply liked “having a chance to talk to dorm and teaching staff.”

Parents felt that teachers could improve aspects of the home-school journal. Although all parents included positive comments about the home-school journal, most parents listed aspects of the journal that they disliked and even listed additional information that they would like teachers to include in the journals. Parents disliked aspects of the journal that seemed to be caused by human error, neglect, and/or an insufficient amount of time for teachers to write in the home-school journals. One parent commented, “Privacy could be an issue. Once or twice the wrong journal was sent home with the wrong student.” These drawbacks of the home-school journal may be
completely unavoidable; however, teachers should certainly work to minimize careless mistakes that may jeopardize confidentiality. Another parent broadly commented that she disliked “the inconsistency of journaling that happens sometimes,” but suggested that teachers follow an outline. She suggested that the outline include “dietary notes (including amounts, likes, dislikes), toileting (good and bad), activities, behaviors, sleep patterns, [and personal] items needed.” Five parents wanted teachers to include more information. These parents listed additional information that they would like to see in the home-school journals, but only two parents had a response in common (advanced notice for fieldtrips). It was obvious that individual characteristics of children influenced home-school journal content.

**Teachers perceived good communication as being personal and individual, but individual teachers’ perceptions of the home-school journal varied.** Individual teachers’ perceptions were largely influenced by parents. Teachers had positive perceptions of the home-school journal when parents wrote in the journals. Likewise, teachers had negative perceptions of the home-school journal when parents did not write in the journal. Teachers were shockingly honest and descriptive on this topic. In fact, one teacher commented that it was “a waste of time” to write in journals if parents did not write back. Another teacher commented that “information sent is useless” when parents did not respond. This teacher did not think that these parents even read notes she wrote in the journal. The teacher felt that it was beneficial to write in journals only if the parents responded. Teachers were divided. Of the five teachers who participated in this study, two teachers had negative perceptions of the journal, two teachers had positive perceptions of the journal, and one teacher had a neutral perception of the journal.
The home-school journal was an effective mode of parent-teacher collaboration for students with disabilities. The home-school journal proved to be an effective way for teachers and parents to collaborate when both parents and teachers wrote in the home-school journals on a regular basis. Analysis of multiple forms of data yielded this conclusion. Parents and teachers agreed that the home-school journal was an effective mode of collaboration. Most parents recalled suggestions that they made to teachers in the home-school journals and commented that teachers made many changes as a result of parent suggestions. Moreover, the home-school journal influenced academic decisions made by teachers. One teacher commented that she shares information about students and asks parents for input on what they would like to see their children doing. Another teacher commented that she provides parents with strategies to increase their children’s skills at home. A teacher commented, “In my experience, parent-teacher collaboration happens every day when we share daily info in the book to each other.” Another teacher wrote, “In some cases it’s the only way to get a response or find any information about a student.”

**Implications for Student Learning**

It is imperative for teachers and parents to both communicate effectively and collaborate on issues that directly affect the development and wellbeing of children with multiple and/or severe disabilities. This becomes increasingly important for a child with limited or no communication skills. Students benefit when parents and teachers communicate. The benefits of sharing information in the home-school journal about a child’s health, mood, and academic achievements are that students’ learning increases, parents can extend learning from the classroom to the home, and students’ healthcare can
be improved. Communicating and collaborating often yields a more holistic perception of children’s abilities and needs. I will continue to use the home-school journal to communicate with parents.

**Implications for My Teaching**

**Improving communication through researching parents’ needs and wants.**

Parents had positive perceptions of the home-school journal, but they indicated ways to improve communication within the journal. At a glance it seems like a difficult task to improve teacher communication in the journal, because almost every parent wanted their child’s teacher to include additional information in the journal. Parents disagreed on information that should be included in the journal. This is a potential problem. However, there may be a simple solution. As a teacher, I will ask parents for feedback about the journals and have individual parents list specific topics they want included in the journal and topics that they do not want to read about. I will ask parents for feedback two or three times a year, as needs and wants may change. I will organize parents’ feedback by creating individual templates for each journal. I will adhere each template to the inside cover of each home-school journal. This will allow me to quickly refer to topics that individual parents want me to write about. I can also develop a system to reduce human error, through scheduling time in the day to write in each journal and designate one staff member to put notebooks in book bags at end of each week. I will also find alternative yet preferred forms of parent communication in the event that I am unable write in a journal.

**Reading is participating.** I feel that it is important to have a positive attitude about a form of communication that parents prefer. Teachers felt that their efforts were
wasted when parents did not respond back. However, based on data collected in this study, it is unclear if all of the parents in this study wrote in the home-school journal. Some parents may have simply read the information that teachers wrote in the journals and chose not to respond back. I feel that parents can participate in home-school journaling by reading teachers’ notes to parents. Parents who do not write in the journal may still enjoy reading what teachers write about their children. Also, parents may not have time to write in the journals or may not be able to write in the journals. This study did not find any evidence that parents who had positive perceptions of the journal also wrote in the journals. For this reason, I think that it is important to call parents periodically if a response is imperative. Depending on one form of communication to collaborate with parents is just not practical.

**Collaborating with parents in the home-school journal.** I will continue to use the home-school journal to collaborate with parents. This study proved the journal was an influential tool for parent-teacher collaboration and decision making. However, utilizing the home-school journal for parent-teacher collaboration can be problematic when parents do not respond back or read what I have written. It is necessary to investigate individual parental preference for alternative forms of communication and collaboration. To improve my collaboration with parents, I will ask parents to inform me of modes of communication that are best for individual parents. The majority of parents in this study preferred teachers to communicate both through home-school journals and teacher phone calls. I will continue to meet parents’ needs by communicating with them through the home-school journal *and* phone calls. Journaling to parents and making
phone calls are time consuming, yet effective. Good communication is not easy communication.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**Parents who are silent participants.** Further research is needed to investigate the perceptions of parents who do not write in the home-school journals. Teachers had negative perceptions when parents did not write in the journals. Teachers felt that they had wasted their own time, because the parents had not even bothered to read what they wrote. However, teachers provided no evidence to support their assumptions. Further research is needed to support teachers' assumptions that parents who do not write in journals also do not read what teachers have written in the journals. The following questions should be added to the Parent Questionnaire to gather more data: “Do you write in the home-school journal,” “How often do you write in the home-school journal,” and “How often do you read what your child’s teacher has written?”

**Very little research on home-school journaling.** Further research is needed to support the findings of this study. This study was limited in that there were a small number of participants, research was only conducted at one school, and very little research has been conducted on home-school journaling at a residential school. In order to support the findings of this study, research needs to be conducted at multiple schools with a larger number of participants.

**Teacher’s perceptions affect parent participation?** Further research is needed to investigate the effects that a teacher’s perception has on parent participation. In this study, teachers’ perceptions of the home-school journal correlated with parents writing in the home-school journals. Research is needed to explore the correlation. For example,
did teachers’ perceptions of the journal influence parental participation? It may be
beneficial for future researchers to analyze the data of each classroom separately.
Researchers could then compare parental perceptions of the home-school journal with the
classroom teacher’s perception of the classroom journal.

Final Thoughts

Teachers really need to evaluate the modes of communication they utilize with
parents. Not only does research prove that effective two-way communication between
parents and teachers improves students’ academic achievement, but No Child Left
Behind (NCLB) requires parental involvement in the form of communication. In fact,
NCLB defines parental involvement as the “participation of parents in regular, two-way,
and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school
activities” (Department of Education, p. 3, 2004). Epstein and Dauber (1991) organized
parent involvement with six categories: (1) parenting, (2) communication, (3)
volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaboration with the
community. Communication is the most visited form of parental involvement, yet up to
ninety percent of parents are still receiving one-way forms of communication like
classroom newsletters and letters addressed to all parents. As teachers, we need to
evaluate our communication system with parents and ask ourselves, “why are we using
this form of communication?” If the answer is “it is easy,” “it is quick,” or “I’ve always
used this form of communication,” chances are it is not the best mode of communication
for parents. Good communication is not easy communication.
References


Appendix A

CONSENT FOR PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE & ANALYSIS OF HOME-SCHOOL JOURNALS

The purpose of this research study is to investigate parents’, teachers’, and residential staff’s perception of the home-school journal, as communication between home and school is very important. Secondly, I would like to investigate if and how home-school journaling influences parent-teacher collaboration. I will conduct a content analysis of home-school journals to investigate evidence of home-school collaboration. I will ensure confidentiality of participant's responses by keeping all notes and interviews in a notebook, at a secure location. Participants will not be identified by their name. At the end of the study, I will shred any identifying information about the participants.

The researcher, Tabitha Fidanza, is a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY in the Education and Human Development Department. This study is a requirement for completing a graduate thesis. First, the researcher will conduct interviews with teachers and residential staff to discuss their perceptions of the home-school journals that are typically sent home every Friday. Second, the researcher will send home parent questionnaires to parents to gather insight on parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal. Third, the researcher will analyze content found in the home-school journals to investigate if there is evidence of collaboration.

Twenty-five parents have been randomly invited to participate in this study. If more than ten parents consent to participate in this study, only ten of the twenty-five will be randomly selected. If you agree to participate in this research study, you will take part
in a parent questionnaire and be asked about your perspectives of the home-school journal allowing the researcher to analyze your child’s home-school journal. This will allow the researcher to gather information about the home-school journal and communication. You also have the option of participating in the parent questionnaire and not allowing the researcher to analyze content found in your child’s home-school journal. In order to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. Your child’s teacher has already given consent for the home-school journal to be analyzed. But your child’s journal will not be analyzed unless you also give consent. You are being asked to make a decision whether to participate in the study. If you are willing to participate in the study, and agree with the statements below, please check your consent option and sign your name in the space provided at the end.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions.

2. My name will not be recorded. If any publication results from this research, I would not be identified by name.

3. My participation involves completing a parent questionnaire and allowing the researcher to analyze my child’s home-school journal. The home-school journal will only be read by the researcher and only used for contextual information.
4. My participation involves answering 8 questions about the home-school journal.

5. There is a risk of time that it takes to complete the questionnaire.

6. The results will be used for the researchers study and completion of a master's thesis by the researcher.

7. I may consent to the parent questionnaire and refuse to allow the researcher to analyze the content of my child's home-school journal.

8. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher and will be destroyed by shredding after the research has been accepted.

9. I understand that administration may request a summary of results. I understand that my name and information will be kept confidential. Administration will not know which parents participated in the study.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study, with the understanding that I may withdraw, without penalty, at any time.
I agree to participate in the parent questionnaire.

Signature of
Participant_________________________ Date:____________________

SIGN ONLY ONE OF THE LINES BELOW, VERIFYING YOUR CHOICE:

I agree to allow the researcher to read and analyze content found in my child’s home-school journal.

Signature of Participant_________________________ Date:____________________

I do not grant consent to allow the researcher to read and analyze content found in my child’s home-school journal.

Signature of Participant_________________________ Date:____________________
Appendix B

Teacher Questionnaire

1. How do you utilize the home-school journal?

2. What information do you include in the home-school journal?

3. In what ways does the home-school journal allow for open-ended two-way communication?

4. Do you feel that the home-school journal is the best form of communication compared to newsletter, handouts, phone calls, emails, or informational letters addressed to all parents? Why or why not?

5. What are parents’ perceptions of the home-school journal? In what ways do you utilize information provided by parents, in other words what do you do with the information? Does it inform instruction, IEP goals, daily activities in the classroom, or dorm activities?

6. In what ways does the home-school journal impact parent-teacher collaboration?

7. What are the benefits of the home-school journals?

8. What are the drawbacks of the home-school journals?
Appendix C

Parent Questionnaire

Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. After you finish this questionnaire, please put it in the envelope provided, seal it, place it in your child’s home journal, and return it to school with your child. This questionnaire is anonymous. All sealed envelopes will be placed in my mailbox and only the researcher will read them.

1. Do you feel that the home-school journal is the best way to communicate with your child’s teacher and dorm staff? Why or why not?

2. For you, what is the best form of home school communication? Circle all that apply:
   - classroom newsletter
   - teacher phone calls
   - notes
   - email
   - informational letters from the school
   - home-school journals.
   Why do you prefer these forms of communication?

3. What information do you want to continue to see in your child’s home-school journal?
What additional information would you like to see in your child’s home-school journal?

4. What do you like about home-school communication journals?

5. What don’t you like about home-school communication journals?

6. Could you list one or two examples of suggestions you’ve written for your child’s teacher or any other school staff in the home-school journal?

To the best of your knowledge, were any changes made as a result of your suggestions?

What changes were made?

7. Rate your perception of the home-school journal. Circle one.

1 I love it 2 Good 3 Its okay 4 I don’t like it 5 Its terrible

8. Additional comments: